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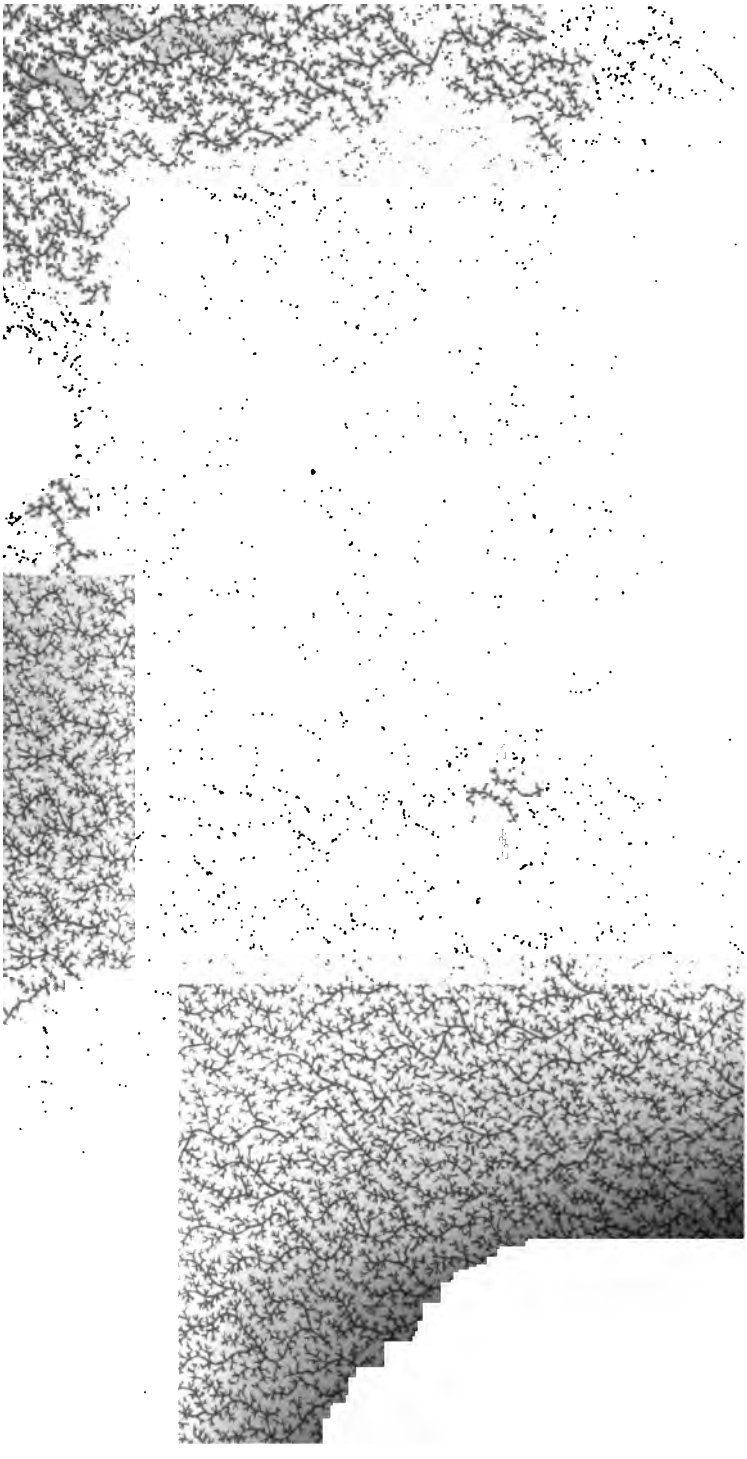

THE

THEOLOGICAL,

PHILOSOPHICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS.

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SERMON

PREFACE.

EVIL is not yet established by law in this country; but good and evil have been growing up together so long, that they will never more be separated, unless it shall be in some small remnant of Christians. By means of predestination falsely stated, the rights of God and his ministry are so far forgotten, that we are getting every day nearer to Babel, and further from Jerusalem. In the last century, this Calvinistic corruption swallowed up both Church and State, and it threatens to do so again, if it be not guarded against, more than I expect it will be. It will not work directly and with the same violence as before, but slowly and by way of sap, under the name, appearance and intention of good, as evil always does, when most mischief is intended. We cannot wonder, that it is so

unmerciful now in consigning the *souls* of men to perdition, when we remember how cruelly it treated their *bodies* and *estates* formerly. God, who saved us before, cannot be expected to save us again, by any equally extraordinary interposition, where the error is the same as before; I have therefore drawn up these few hints to set wise men on thinking: if I had been in health, I would have carried them much farther: I pray God to turn them to good, to the end that old apostolical faith, that piety and peace, may still remain among us.

SERMON

SERMON I.

CALLING AND ELECTION.

2 PETER I. 10.

BRETHREN, GIVE DILIGENCE TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

THERE is not a more plain precept than this in the gospel; even a child that has been christened, and has learned the catechism of the church, is taught to be thankful to God, who by *baptism has called it to a state of salvation*; and to pray and to hope, that with the help of God's grace which he promises in that sacrament, it *may continue in the same state unto its life's end.*

This, I say, is plain doctrine, and I am sure it is true: we may also safely say, it is the doc-

other men shall know by their fruit what we may ourselves be ignorant of; and that whatever our inward testimony may say, they shall clearly see by our works to what party we belong; whether to the Author of *Peace*, or the spirit of *confusion*. If we look back into the last century, we may find examples in plenty of great sinners, who thought themselves great saints; and some of them are reported as such to this day; to the great danger of some Christians, and the great grief of others. This was the lamentable and hopeless state of the Pharisees; "They trusted in themselves that they "were righteous, and despised others;" but God knew their hearts. He saw that their contempt of others was as vain as their opinion of themselves; and the doctrine which they had about their own election as Jews might be the foundation of all: for I believe the doctrine of election had never a worse effect and a worse issue than it had upon them. The like persuasion, instead of being a ground of safety and comfort to Christians, has been a delusion of Satan to draw souls into perdition: and if there be any amongst us who never yet observed this, we should pray to God to open their eyes, and give them grace to be alarmed at the prospect; for it is a dreadful one.

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This doctrine is further dangerous, as it favors the practise of schismatical division in the Church; it both promotes and covers the evil of separation: whether that was foreseen by those who brought it into fashion I will not say; but it was seen in a short time after by every body else, and this use of it was very natural: for who shall convince those of sin in schism who have a rule above us all? If we will allow it, they have an inward testimony superior to all authority upon earth, and who shall dare to speak against it? When Jesus Christ was upon earth, no man was so hated and despised as He: and by whom? By proud, conceited, quarrelsome people, who called themselves the elected of God in their Father Abraham. The contempt which then fell upon Jesus Christ, now falls upon his Church; and from the same sort of people, who call themselves the *Elect.*

When the superstition of the church of Rome was done away by the overthrow of order, and the presumption of envious or insidious piety prevailed among irregular protestants, then this doctrine came in and abounded; but it may soon be detected, for it is either with the means of grace administered in the Christian Church, or it is without them: if it is with them,

them, then let them shew us how the privilege of one Christian is above another Christian. Are not all entitled to the same promises? Will not baptism carry a child to heaven? As surely, though it be born of a slave, and baptized in a church, as if it were of noble birth, and baptized in a parlour. Under the means of grace in Christ Jesus there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free; but all are equal. If election be *without* the means of grace, then it explains itself; it must be an imposture; it is to supply their place, and render them superfluous; and when the means of grace are gone, the appearance of Christianity will last but a short time.

If any person, through pride or envy, hath thrown himself out of the Church, or is not able to prove himself in it; I say, if any such person can yet boast of his election to salvation, and persuade others to believe him, to what purpose then did Jesus Christ found a Church in opposition to the gates of hell, and promise to be with it to the end of the world? Here is a persuasion to which it doth not appear that *any* Church is necessary: therefore all dissenters are fond of a Churchman, who believes it: it is a notion that rests in the conceit of a man's own mind; and if we admit its authority, what

is

is the consequence? We then give to the word of a man a place above the word of God. A good meaning is supposed by weak people to sanctify a bad action: but St. Paul meant well when he persecuted the Christian Church; yet he condemned himself severely for it afterwards. It may be said by some who profess this doctrine, that they take it for their comfort, and mean no harm by it; intending thereby to draw us away from the foundations of truth and the certainty of divine promises, till the whole Christian fabric falls into ruins at once; as if, when the kingdom of God were departed from amongst us, some other new light should spring up in the world.

Enough has been said to prove the danger of this doctrine; I think it may be shewn as plainly that it is not a doctrine of the scripture. This we freely allow, that the election of Christians *out of the world* into the Church of Christ is plain and certain: but the election of Christians *out of Christians* is not so; if there were such a thing, it is what we cannot know, having no visible sign for it, and therefore we do wrong, and must bring ourselves and the Church into danger if we pretend to know it. The religion of the gospel, by which we are saved, is the religion of *faith, hope,* and *charity*; to this religion

religion we are called at our baptism; with that which cannot be reduced to any of these three we have no concern; and such is the knowledge of God's secret decrees. We are not called upon to know what cannot be known, neither are we required to act as if we knew it: we are to trust in God, but always to be in fear for ourselves; and thence the church wisely directs us to pray, that even in our last hour we may not fall from him. To what end is this prayer, if it be determined by our predestination that we shall *never fall?* This language of the Church implies, that we *may* fall even to the last moment, and that we are never safe till death shall put an end to sin and temptation.

The great mistake seems to have consisted in applying to *Christians* what is said to heathens. The vessel of wrath fitted to destruction was an heathen; a man never taken into the covenant of God, and who had determined that he never would be. It should always be remembered, that in the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle is arguing against the Jews, about the reception of the heathens; a thing they could never bear to hear of, because they confined all grace to themselves. There is not a Christian upon earth who can prove that he is entitled to any

any one privilege but what he hath in common with other Christians; he is therefore to *pass the time of his sojourning here in fear*; not to think that he has found out a short way of being saved, a way unknown to other people: not to be high-minded, as the Jews were, who fell, through vain confidence of their own election. Such a sort of election the scriptures do not teach; they shew the vanity of it from the example of the Jews: the text also is expressly against it; for if Christians are called upon to make their *election sure*, then is that election such as may be *not sure*. Why else is it said, "let him "that thinketh he standeth take heed left he "fall?" He who *thinketh* he hath got farther can *only think so*; and in that he may be grossly mistaken. And how doth he stand? not by certain knowledge, as he pretends, but *by faith*: faith in the promise of God, as his only security.

There is no case more to our purpose than that of the Apostle St. Paul: he was a vessel individually chosen by God: in him we see the election of God's grace falling on a single person: but what does he infer from it? No absolute exemption from danger: he supposes that he may still be cast away, and lost by his own neglect. He led a severe, watchful,

and mortified life, "*lest, when he had preached* "*to others, he himself should be a caſtaway.*" Will any man presume upon privileges higher and surer than those of this great Apostle? Might St. Paul be cast away? who then shall dare to be secure? He, who can persuade himself that God hath called him to a privilege which St. Paul had not, must be under some strong delusion.*

But is there no assurance? Undoubtedly there is: but it is the *assurance of faith*, and the *assurance of hope*: for any thing further we must wait till that judgment for which all men are reserved; which shall detect the secrets of all hearts; laying open to thousands the true nature of those works, that they never understood before, though they imagined they did. How shall God *judge every man according to his works*, if every man is to judge himself before half his works are done, according to his *feelings?* Are we to judge first, and is God to judge afterwards? Can we think such a thing without blasphemy? and can we teach it, without thereby rendering our whole religion of no effect, as the Jews did by a like presumption? Shall we take from the chief Shepherd his office of separating the sheep from the goats in the next life, by doing

* See Note 1, p. 23.

doing it for him beforehand in this life? Shall we poor blind sinners dare to say who have made their election sure, and who have not, when probably our first mistake is about ourselves? All this may be prevented by a single text from St. Paul, "Judge nothing before the "time, until the LORD come, who both will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, "and will make manifest the counsels of the "hearts, and then shall every man have praise "of God." Till we shall obtain *that* praise, let us forbear to depend upon our own, which will only render us suspected by those who know how to distinguish. In the mean time we may know with absolute certainty that no election will save us, but that which teaches us to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*. Poor self-condemning mourners, who lament their own sins, and those of the church to which they belong*, are in a much safer way, than those who are confident and self-witnessed: and they have a blessing on their side; "Blessed are they that mourn (especially "for sin) for they shall be comforted."

If, after all I have said, there should still remain in any man a desire to be assured, whether God hath actually adopted him for one of

* See Ezekiel ix. 4.

could support the Martyrs of the Christian Church, but this one consideration, that if God called upon them to suffer, he called upon them to be saved, according to that faithful saying, that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him?" But that a man, with blood-guiltiness upon his head, and that of the worst sort, unrepented of, should be an heir of salvation, and find himself in the sure way to heaven, is a dream fit only for a deluded Christian of the last days to believe: if there ever was *one* person so deluded, the case would make us for ever afraid of this doctrine; whereas history assures us there have been many, and that in this kingdom.

Upon the whole, Christianity is a religion which does not busy itself about decrees never to be known nor understood;* but which believes *promises*, rejoices in *hope*, acts with *charity* and suffers with *patience*. It does not send a man to heaven by the short soft way of sweet meditation and self-complacency; but it sends him first to Calvary to carry a cross after Jesus Christ; to bear some trying affliction, some burden of sorrow, which God lays upon him; he may then think himself a true child of God, and in the right way to make his calling and election sure.

*See Note 2, p. 25.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.—*Page* 18.

FOR that sense of election which I allow and rejoice in, I have two excellent authorities, Bishop *Andrews* and Bishop *Jeremy Taylor*; the former of which has these words in one of the forms of prayer in his daily devotions: "Let "my faith in the Church entitle me to a part in its calling "and election." (Andrews' Devot. p. 36. Bishop Horne's edition,) Bishop Andrews is right in ascribing salvation *first* to the *Church*, and from the Church to its members; for thus we are taught to argue from the figure of Noah's ark: to be saved by *water* was a property original to the ark; and salvation was derived from the ark to those who were taken into it: so election belongs first to the Church, the prototype of the ark. Such as were to be saved when the world was drowned were taken into the ark. Such as shall be saved when the world shall be again destroyed are *added to the Church*. The Church, we grant, may be much degenerated; but so long as it is a Church, the promises of God must remain with it. If its privilege of bringing children to a state of salvation is lost, how and when did it lose it? Time might possibly produce a leak in the ark, yet certainly none of such consequence as to change its na-

ture, and prevent its usefulness. The Christian Church, by reason of its connection with this world, has fallen into many mistakes and irregularities, which piety will lament and correct as far as it can, instead of triumphing in them as an occasion for mockery and insult against God and his institutions. Difficult cases must occur from the commerce between the Church and the world, too great for us to resolve; and we must leave them to the judgment of the great day; as we ought also to leave those mysterious characters, in which we find such a mixture of godliness and prophaneness as to our judgment is utterly unaccountable.

In a prayer to be used on his birth-day, Bishop *Taylor* speaks thus: "I give thee glory that thy hand sustained "and brought me to the illumination of baptism with thy "grace preventing my election, by an artificial neceſſity "and holy prevention engaging me to the profeſſion and "practises of Christianity." (See Holy Living, p. 316.) I cannot stop without shewing how differently election is spoken of by a great predestinarian, and of what sort his proof is: "let it suffice," saith he, "that we *feel it*:" but this, we affirm, is the very thing that will *not suffice*; because our Saviour hath expressly cautioned us against it upon more occasions than one. He commands us to judge their feelings by their fruits; and not as they themselves do, their fruits by their feelings. We have seen how lamentably many have been deceived, and how they have deceived here; but hear how this predestinarian concludes, "and let them perish with their errors that cast away a doctrine of such heavenly use." (See Bishop Babington's sermon, p. 35, in Sir Richard Hill's Apology for Brotherly Love): that is, let them perish who do not receive our election with its self evidence of feelings, which our Saviour would not admit in favour of himself; "if I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." Who then shall

shall insist upon our receiving their own witness, and tell us it is sufficient for *them*, when it was not sufficient for *Jesus Christ?* They must think themselves in this respect more sufficient than He. He appeals to that second greater witness, "The works which my Father giveth me to finish "bear witness of me."

Thus must it be in our case; to visible works we must at last appeal; and we shall be confident the rule is right, though predestinarians go on to the end of the world wishing that we may perish for insisting upon it. Miserable it is to see what self conceit and unmerciful judging of others this doctrine produces in the hearts of Christians. This uncharitableness to fellow-Christians is sufficient witness against it, and proves it to be worth nothing: yet if we were to believe some writers, it is the first and greatest of incentives to brotherly love; but if you will examine it, you will find it to be of a very spurious sort; it embraces *Schismatics*, but cannot endure a Churchman. If it be thus unmerciful to men's souls, and consigns them so easily to perdition, who can wonder that in the last age it spared neither men's bodies nor estates?

NOTE 2. *On the XVIIth Article.*

BY the adversaries of the Church of England, who take Calvin for their guide, it has been boasted that the 17th article is calvinistical: but this our best divines never allowed; they say the times required that the article should be *neutral*. So the fact appears to be; and the article may be retained, as far as it goes; for it teaches us to receive the *promises* of God, and to act according to his *will*, as it is expressly declared. His *will* we *do* know; and his *promises* we know; his *decrees* relating to particular persons, we do *not* know; and therefore we cannot set up his decrees

crees against his promises. The article tells us, the elect are taken *out of mankind*; this we allow; but the spurious predestinarian holds, that Christians are elected out of Christians; which doctrine is to be found neither in the Scripture nor in the article; though we apprehend, less than this will not come up to the wishes of the Calvinists. They preach to us, that the unknown decrees of God, and the use they make of them, are necessary to be admitted by all true Christians; warning us, that we are under strong temptation not to admit them, because they humble our pride; and is there not enough to do it without them? and wishing that all may *perish* who do not admit them. But how then does it happen, that neither St. Peter nor any of the Apostles ever published this doctrine as a foundation for Christians to build upon? When the new converts on the day of Pentecost asked Peter and the rest of the Apostles what they should do, he does not bid them believe the all-sufficient doctrine of predestination for the remission of sins; but commands them to "*repent and be baptized, every one of them, for the remission of sins, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"

St. Paul, having a knowledge of the secret decrees of God by revelation, argues from them to reconcile the Jews to the *election* of *heathens*; but never makes them articles of faith, or principles of action: and from the great stress laid upon them in these latter days, a snake in the grass is to be feared; and he that knows the history of predestination must have discovered, that this doctrine hath been and is the strong hold of schism: therefore I take St. Peter's *old* doctrine rather than this *new*; and I would advise all Christians to do the same. If it should be said, that baptism is now what it was in St. Peter's time, what is it but to us, that we have lost the *promises* of God, and have *no Church?* This will be a pleasant hearing to the Catholics, who have been telling us the same thing the Reformation.

SERMON II.

The Necessity and Advantages of Prayer: with a Method of praying always.

LUKE xviii. 1.

MEN OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY.

THE man who does not *pray*, does not *live*; he may walk about, and seem to be alive, but he does not *live*, in the christian sense of the word; for as the natural breath is a proof that the body is alive, so the breath of prayer is a proof that religion is alive in the heart. When the body ceases to breathe perceptibly, in that case its life becomes doubtful, and it may be actually dead: even so that faith, which does not breathe in prayer to God, may be dead past recovery; at least, there may be great danger that

that it will never come to a state of life and godliness. Many considerations naturally arise from this likeness between *breath* and *prayer*; for, is it *easy* to breathe? it must *also* be easy to pray. If the body be alive and well, it breathes of itself, without pain or difficulty; and prayer will in like manner be a thing of course, if faith be *alive* in the heart. Is it *necessary* to breathe? *so* necessary, that life cannot long continue without it? It is *equally* necessary to pray; for the spiritual life of the soul cannot possibly be preserved without it. There is something always at hand, which will never fail to destroy it; of this our Saviour gave notice on a certain occasion to his disciples: *pray*, said he, *that ye enter not into temptation.* Temptation would destroy us all: and, if we enter into it, we shall, without God's grace, fall under it. It was this, that first brought death into the world; and is now the great danger of man. The first evil did not arise from man's own nature, but from the suggestion of the devil; who first taught man to disobey his Maker, and which it is ever at hand to teach the same lesson at this hour: and his manner of teaching is different from what it was at first; he taught evil to our first parents by a teaching from *without*; he now teaches from *within*

within us: he gets into our hearts and affections, and worketh *in* the children of disobedience; it is therefore a petition in the Lord's Prayer, that our heavenly Father would not *lead us into temptation.* This is *one* of the reasons why we ought to pray: if we would know them *all*, we must find them in the Lord's Prayer: because the petitions of it shew us what are the *duties*, the *wants*, and the *dangers* of man. They shew us, why we *ought* to pray; why we *must* pray; and what will certainly happen to us if we do *not* pray. They direct us to the first object of our thoughts; even to the great God that made us; the Father of our being, the Author of our faculties. He is the great object of our worship; and the man who is made by him, and does not worship him, differs in nothing from a beast, but in his ingratitude; the basest of all sins, and such as beasts are seldom guilty of: for the *ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.* Even the dog is mindful of him that feedeth him. What must the man be then, who makes *no* return of worship to God, who feedeth the creation? Can any man consider the greatness of his kingdom, without raising his voice, and lifting up his heart, to promote the glory and honour of it? Every christian soul

gary is a science. And all this is for the wants of the body, which must soon be at an end. The *soul* has its wants, which none, but God, can supply; and cannot live a single day, unless they are supplied: I say *live*; for the life that is *without* God is *not* life: his grace is as necessary to the soul, as bread is to the body: for *man liveth not by bread alone, but by the word of God:* and as the manna came down from heaven *every day*, we are thereby taught, that man must do as the Israelites did; he must go out *every day* to seek it by *prayer*, and *gather it.* If we seek it, we shall find it; nothing is promised to him, that *seeketh not*; he who knows this, and acts accordingly, is a true believer: he feels himself to be, when he comes to God, what the beggar feels himself, when he comes to the door of plenty: *hungry*, and *thirsty*, and *full of complaints;* he feels, what no man but a Christian can feel; his hunger and thirst are therefore blessed: they are a *proof* that he is *alive;* they have a promise, that they shall be filled. But he that asketh not, hungers not; and he that hungers not, has not the wants of a living man.

We are now to consider that every man ought to pray as a *sinner;* for a sinner he certainly is. *In many things we offend all: and*

if

if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, no flesh should be saved. What shall then become of us, without forgiveness of sin? for *this purpose* were the morning and evening sacrifices appointed from the beginning, which ought to be *daily* offered at this time, in their proper signification, to him, without whom *there is no remission of sin.* All men are guilty of offences which they *do* know; and of many more, which they do *not* know. Hence the Psalmist says, *who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults!* Sins of both kinds were equally before the eyes of God, and needed the advantage of the sacrifice. That forgiveness of sin is to be prayed for *daily,* is manifest from hence; because it is the subject of a petition in the Lord's Prayer, which is *daily* to be used. But the same was signified by the *daily practice* of the Church, before *that prayer* was given: every sacrifice that was offered shewed the *necessity of atonement* for sin. And the sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple being offered *daily* in the *morning* and *evening* service, the congregation who offered them applied for forgiveness of sin *twice a day* to God: and *less,* I think, will not suffice in *any family* at *this* day. We are not departed from the custom of

sacrificing, though we do not offer up a bloody sacrifice, as of old; but we offer to the Father his Son Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins upon the Cross. *Twice in the day* doth the Church direct all its members to put up a petition to heaven, that the *Lord would have mercy upon us miserable offenders, according to his promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.* But here it should be well considered, that when we ask forgiveness for our sins, we ask it, on condition that we forgive the sins of others. The words are easily spoken; but what man can fulfil them, without the grace of God to dispose and assist him? for wrath and malice are in the heart of man: *the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy;* and we *thirst for revenge* against those who have *despised, offended,* or *injured* us. The struggle between duty and passion is often very hard to *good* men; who cannot bring their minds to calmness, patience and forbearance, till they set before their eyes the patience of Jesus Christ, who *pleaded* and *prayed for his murderers.*

But after all that has been said, the greatest reason for prayer is yet behind. Our duty first calls upon us to pray; next, our wants and necessities; and lastly, our dangers. From the

final

final petitions of the Lord's prayer, we may learn what will certainly become of us, if we *do not* pray: viz. that we shall, as I observed before, be *led into temptation*, and not be *delivered from evil.* The first temptation brought death with it: all temptation aims at man's destruction: and the world is full of it. Every age, every state of life, hath its temptations. How shall we meet them? how shall we overcome them? *never*, without the help of God; and this I cannot repeat too often: that help *he* will not find, who does *not pray* for it. If you would have a prospect of all the dangers to which man is liable, set before your eyes the *three* great enemies of his salvation; always endeavouring to draw him into sin. Look at the vain and wicked *world*, with all its ways and its fashions, its vain pageants and diversions, its corrupt customs and lies; by which it acquires an absolute authority over the unguarded man: it first deceives him, and then domineers over his judgment. Next to this, behold the *flesh*, with all its appetites; all of which are by nature given to impetuosity, and excess. As the dog goes to his vomit, and the swine to its wallowing in the mire, so doth the natural man, if he has self-indulgence for his rule, lose the understanding of a man, and fall into what is beastly and destructive. Every

lect to pray: nothing further is necessary; all the rest will follow of course.

My design in what I have already said on these words, has been to shew the necessity of prayer to those who *do not* pray: in what follows, I shall speak to those who *do* pray; with the hope of teaching them how to pray *better*; by giving them a new method of *praying always*: which may seem to be a very hard thing; but you are not here to understand, that men are *always* to be upon their knees: for then the business of life could not go forward, as the condition of man in this world requires. To separate the time of business from the time of prayer, stated hours were appointed in old time: and devout persons, who observed them, might be said to *pray always*; that is, at *all* the appointed *hours* of prayer. I consider *Cornelius* the Centurion to have been *one* of these: and that it is therefore said of him, that *he prayed to God always*; that is, he prayed with the Church *daily*, at all the hours of prayer. The time of the day when he saw the vision agrees with *this*; it appeared to him at the *ninth* hour of the day (one of the hours of prayer) and while he was in the act of prayer: because it is said to him, as to a man who was praying, *thy prayers are come up before God.*

Peter,

Peter, in like manner, had his vision, at the *sixth* hour of the next day: when he went up according to custom, to the house-top, to pray. There are those, who mock at us for praying formally at appointed hours of the day: as if all praying were to be by fits and starts, as man pleases: but if God himself from heaven has paid regard to these times, we are undoubtedly justified in the practice; and it is in conformity to God's will that we should so pray. This custom of praying with the Church at all the regular times of prayer, was one of the methods of praying *always*. The chapter from which the text is taken shews us another way. A poor widow is represented as praying for justice to an unjust Judge, who, it seems, attended to her petition lest she should weary him by her *continual* coming. Our Saviour relates the parable, to shew us the certain effect of *perseverance* in prayer; we *should pray without ceasing*, till our petition is granted, how long soever it may please God to try our faith and patience, by not granting it so soon as we might hope and expect. We ought therefore to pray always, without fainting, or being wearied out; and this is the sense of *praying always*, according to the text. But there is another way, which to me seems the most excellent

with them at Emmaus, "*abide with us, for the day is far spent.*"

The elements and the changes of the weather will supply us with more matter of the same sort. If there cometh rain to water the earth, let us be thankful, not only for *that,* but for the grace of God, and the word of truth, which *cometh down from heaven as the rain:* that the soul of man may be fruitful in works of righteousness. As the earth is parched in a time of drought, and cracked with dryness, so should man open his mouth, and say with the Psalmist, "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, in a barren and dry land where no water is." If there cometh thunder, we should listen to it, as to the voice of God; which, what noise soever men may make below, will be heard above all. How insignificant do the word and power of man appear, whenever God is pleased to shew himself, and his lightning shines from one end of heaven to the other! This appearance should always remind us, that the Lord will at last be revealed in flaming fire. What will then become of us, if we have never thought of his judgments, till they are upon us, and the great account is to be given by all sinners? He who lives by the rule I am now giving, will never be surprized. He sets the Lord

always

always before him, therefore he shall not be moved: if his heart is ready, he will in every place find matter for prayer or for praise. If he is in a garden, he thinks on Paradise: how it was lost by the first Adam, who ate in sin; and how it was regained by the second Adam, who fasted in the wilderness. If he is in the fields or meadows, by the river-side, and sees the flocks and herds feeding, he remembers, that he himself belongs to God's pasture: he prays, that the Lord, the keeper of Israel, who is his Shepherd, will convert and bring him back, when he strays from the paths of righteousness, and will lead him forth beside the waters of comfort: under these circumstances he may be disposed to repeat the twenty-third Psalm; and he will then feel the force of it.

The husbandman, who is employed in the works of the field, has many opportunities beyond other men; all his works are of such a sort, as may suggest religious thoughts, and lead his mind to devotion: our blessed Saviour took one of his finest parables from the labours of the field; where the ground, good and bad, is the heart of man; the seed is the word of God; the wheat the righteous; the tares the ungodly; the harvest the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Who can have these things

things before him, without thinking about himself; what he is, and what is to become of him? and these thoughts will lead him to his prayers; that he may be ready to receive into his mind the good seed of God's word, and to lay it up in his heart, as the grain is covered in the earth, that it may bring forth fruit to life eternal. Then shall the angels come at the end of the world, when the great harvest shall be gathered, to take the elect into the kingdom of God. If the husbandman thinks on these things, his work will be sanctified; and he himself will be brought nearer every day to the kingdom of heaven. It is very truly said of the husbandman, that his work is never done; every season, every day, brings some new employment with it. It is the same with the Christian: his work is never done; and he would be under a dangerous mistake, if he should think it is: for the tempter is always at some new device, to give a Christian sorrow or trouble; *he* never thinks *his* work done, till the man is destroyed, and made a child of hell, instead of a child of God.

I would have it here to be remembered, that I am only giving a few examples, which the learner is to practise upon, and be multiplying all the days of his life. I open a school-door,

into

into which he that is disposed may enter and profit according to his capacity; the employment is delightful; and the matter inexhaustible.

In our observations upon other people, charity and all the christian virtues will be exceedingly promoted, if we use ourselves to make a short prayer on what passes before our eyes. Thus if we see one that is blind; how proper would it be to say, "Lord, thou hast taken from *that* man *bodily* sight, give him the sight of the *mind*, which is far better." If you see one that is *lame*, you may say, "O thou who didst enable the *lame to walk*; tho' thou art not *now* present with us, to heal the infirmities of our bodies, thou canst still show us the *path of life*, and enable us to walk in the way everlasting: thus shall the *halt* and *lame* enter into life." If we hear of any one that is fallen into some dreadful sin or calamity, it would be proper to say, "Lord, I bless thy name, that I myself am not made an *example* to *that* man, who is now made an *example* to *me*: raise up *him* that is fallen; and let me not *be high minded, but fear*; for *blessed is the man that feareth always* in such a world as this." If you should hear the bell sound for a funeral, you may say, "*Lord, make me wise to consider my latter end: that while*

while I live I may live unto thee, and when I die, I may die unto thee, so that living and dying I may be *thine.*"

Once more: if you should be present when criminals are judged at an assize; think of the great tribunal of Jesus Christ: think, how we shall *all* be called out of our graves, to *stand before his judgment-seat:* in which case it is hardly possible for a man to turn his eyes towards himself, without saying, "Lord, *how, where,* shall I appear in that dreadful day? O let thy holy angels find me, to *strengthen* and *encourage* me, before I *dare* to look upon thy face; that so I may have *boldness* in the day of judgment, and find myself placed on *thy right hand* among the heirs of salvation: *Lord remember me in that day*; for my *heart panteth,* my *strength faileth,* when I think of it: but thou *didst expire* upon the Crofs, to *lessen* the terrors of it to *me* and *all poor penitent sinners.*"

There would be no end, if we were to collect such other examples as might be thought of; the *day,* the *night,* the *sea,* the *land,* the *heaven above,* and the *earth beneath,* abound with objects to exercise our devotion. I would now say a word or two on the advantage of praying in this manner. If prayer be a labour to the mind, there is none of it here: a small transient

ejaculation

ejaculation is sufficient to signify the disposition of the heart, even though it be not uttered by the lips: for God is a witness to the meditations of the heart. Therefore it may be used in society, as well as in solitude: and in whatever work a man is employed, provided it be lawful, it will not be interrupted but promoted. Is the husbandman *interrupted*, if, when he casts the seed into the ground, he prays that the seed of God's word may take root in his own heart? so far from it, that it will bring down a blessing upon himself and his labour: and improve his daily work into a work of grace; a work, by which his mind will be kept in constant practice, to a temper of piety; so that he may be strictly said, to *walk with God*, as the Saints did of old; which should be the *first object* of a Christian's ambition. The agreement between the objects of the natural world and the objects of revelation, so amply and illustriously displayed in the Scriptures, shews (to those who understand it) a wonderful sight; it shews the whole Creation as one great picture of divine truth: which will give as much entertainment, and afford more variety to the imagination of a Christian, than all the works of genius, which all the wit of man ever did, or ever will invent. It is as wide as the world, and as bright as the ocean,

ocean, when the sun shines upon it. Religious meditation and devotion draw it forth into use; and shew so many ways of applying it to the edification of the mind, that if we can bring any qualified person to this one employment, he will never complain that Christianity is a dry study. It infuses a new spirit into common things, which in themselves are dull and insipid: every trifling event assumes a new figure and new importance, when applied to spiritual things: every common object changes its nature and value: * the touch of a devout mind has a magical effect upon it, and turns it into gold; so that to live by this rule, and turn all objects to a spiritual use, is the next thing to living in a spiritual world.

There will be this further advantage, and a great one it is, that we shall find this sort of devotion our *best security* against temptation.

* If the reader wishes to know better this art of applying natural objects to sacred subjects; I would desire him to consult a small *Key to the language of Prophesy*, bound up with the third edition of the *Book of Nature*; also, *Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Scriptures*. *The husbandman's Manual*; with such other things as he can collect of the same kind: particularly *a treatise on Ejaculatory Prayer*, by the Rev. Robert Cooke, late Vicar of Boxted, in Essex. All printed for *Rivingtons*.

Good

Good thoughts will keep out evil ones. The tempter makes use of all objects to corrupt our minds, and draw us into evil: the way of turning them to godliness, is directly contrary to his way of turning them to sin: and therefore it is the best remedy in the world against his devices; it may be used also, as a test to the mind, whether it be alive to God or not. If the Christian finds himself disposed to it, or if he does not, he may thence learn the state of his own soul, and discover, whether he is a carnal or a spiritual man; whether he is in the light or in the dark: if he feels no inclination to it, his own soul is then a thing of no concern to him. Satan may have it, for what he cares; this world has blinded his eyes: all the objects in it serve to wrong uses; it is a curse, and not a blessing to him, that he was brought into it; and when that perishes, he must perish with it.

If a man sees nothing spiritual here, he will see nothing hereafter: but if he looks at the things of this world with an eye of faith, and can make them the subject of some petition to God, he may then conclude, that his heart is *alive;* and that, with the help of divine grace, he may so pass through things temporal, and make such an use of them, that they shall help him to pass on through them, to things eternal.

Before I conclude, my beloved brethren, suffer me once more to look back to the subject of prayer in general; of which I must always think, and will always affirm it, that it is the *first practical* duty of the Christian religion: on which consideration, I know not what to say of those Christians, who do *not pray:* they will pardon me, if I know not what to call them; I can scarcely cry out with the prophet, "*awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.*" To speak freely, I wonder how any family can look one another in the face, when they assemble together in the morning, to begin the works of the day, without a solemn invocation of Almighty God, for his direction, help, and blessing on all the affairs of this transient and dangerous state. I shall be thankful, if one single soul should be brought by what I have here said to a better mind.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Danger of despising lawful Authority.

ST. JUDE, VERSE 8.

THESE FILTHY DREAMERS DEFILE THE FLESH, DESPISE DOMINION, AND SPEAK EVIL OF DIGNITIES.

THE people here described are every way reprehenſible. They are compared to the men of Sodom for their wickedness; and to *dreamers*, for their absurdity and foolishness; their thoughts, principles, and reasonings, having no more foundation in sense, than those of men in a dream. There always were such people in existence; but of late, a new and abundant generation of them has appeared in the world; as if a swarm of locusts had lately issued out of

the bottomleſs pit, with fire and smoke, to deſtroy all things. They are very busy in the work of turning the world upside down; and a considerable part of their work (the beginning on which all depends) consists in cheating the senses, and inflaming the passions of ignorant people. They are said to *despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*. Dominion is the same with Government: these people *despise* the thing, and speak evil of those that exercise it: but their argumentation signifies no more than if they were talking in their sleep, according to the visions or the fancies with which the brain is then occupied.

This is as exact a description of some persons who now make a great noise in the world, as if the Apostle had seen them. But that is no wonder: folly and wickedness may find some new words; but they are no new things. What Satan does now in the children of disobedience, is so like what he did formerly, that we are *not ignorant of his devices:* and the delusions of men are after the old fashion, though they may find some new expressions.

The text requires us to examine, first, what the thing is which these people despise: secondly, how they proceed, when they would make others despise it.

The

The thing which they despise is *Dominion*. The word here used signifies lordship over others: and such lordship there must be in some persons or other, because the world cannot go on without it: there must be rulers below, as there are rulers above. The sun is said to rule over the day; and the moon and stars to govern the night: without them, nature would be all in confusion. The elements of the world are of contrary tempers, and must be regulated by the powers of heaven, which keep them to their appointed course. The state of the natural world is, and will ever be, so long as it continues, a state of government. The sun will be the lord and ruler of the day: and if any man should talk of improving the world, by setting the elements to rule themselves better without the sun, we should immediately pronounce that man to be in a dream. And the case is as clear with respect to human society. For no man comes into this world to have his own will; but to have somebody set over him, that he may *not* have it. And the reason is this; that if one man be born to have his own will, another will be born to have his: but this is not possible: for different men *will* very different things: two men want the same thing, where but one of them can have it. Their wills inter-

they? Who, but the men that cry out for liberty? Honest men want no liberty, but that of being secure and unmolested in their possessions; for which end law and government were established in the world. Liberty and government, in the mouths of some men, are two opposite things, but they are in their nature the same. Laws may be mild and favourable to the people: but government must be government: there may be liberty *under* it, but there can be no liberty *against* it. For as the total absence of government would be absolute confusion; so every relaxation of government is a weakness which partakes of anarchy, and must be attended with many of its effects. If you would know what a nation is *with* government, and what *without* it, look at a man of sense, and a madman. The man of sense walks by rule: he has a regard to the happiness of others as well as his own, knowing that they have an equal right to it; and he lives in subjection to the laws of God and man. In the madman, the governing principle is gone: he has no rule, but his inclination to folly and mischief: it is dangerous to meet him abroad; therefore he is shut up, and his liberty is taken away for the safety of all honest sober people, who go regularly about their business. If there

should be a majority of lunatics, they would vote themselves to be the only people of sense, and pronounce the sober part of the world to be mad. If in such a case there should not be power enough to restrain them, in what a fearful condition should we be! God Almighty deliver us from it! And it is certainly his will that we *should* be delivered from it, by his appointing law and government amongst us.

Let us then ask what this government is? When men are gathered into an orderly society, they are called *a body*; because, like a body, they are under some head, which rules and directs all the rest of the members. If the head is stricken off from a body, that body falls into convulsions, and becomes a shocking spectacle. If the head is of no effect, the body is like that of a madman, acting extravagantly and doing mischief. Every body therefore must have some effective head to rule and direct, and a people under a government of due authority, and who are themselves in due subordination, are like the body of man when in a rational and healthy state, and in a fair way to continue so. The two cases of an army by land, and a ship at sea, are plain cases, which shew that whatever the co ɔn of a government may be in theory, in practice, under some one leader, as

as a natural body has one head. The ship then keeps her destined course; but if the crew are mutinous, and rise upon the commander, then the ship turns pirate and plunders the world, or changes her course, and sets sail for some paradise of fools in a remote part of the universe. The history of such a crew would be something like the history of a certain nation, now in a state of piracy against the world, whose directors are nothing but criminals, and, as such, merit the fate of robbers and ruffians, which by the just judgment of God many of them have met with.

The sum of the matter is this. Man is not under his own will, but under the will of God: and as man doth not know the will of God, nor can know it; the laws of society must originally come from God; and the authority to execute those laws must be from the same. He that kills a man for his own will and pleasure without law is a murderer: he that kills him with law is a judge or ruler; one into whose hand God, for the maintaining of his own laws, and the safety of the people, puts a sword: and if he holds that sword in vain, evil prevails, and the hand is turned against himself. This was the case of the poor unfortunate

tunate King of France; of whom it is said, that by permitting the law to take its course against a few worthless wretches, not fit to live, (as he was intreated to do at a critical moment, when the sword was in his hand); he might have saved the lives of a million of innocent people. How many more we know not: for the confusion being once begun, and among the people who have always given fashions to Europe, may last to the world's end, and be the immediate cause of its end.

Look upon the natural world, and see how quiet and orderly it is under the Government of God. *There* his laws are never broken. The sun shines; the Moon rises; the stars are in their prescribed stations; the tides ebb and flow at their time; the spring gives her flowers; the summer ripens the corn; and the autumn gathers it. Thus tranquil and orderly would *human* society be, if it would but be as obedient to the laws of God. Oh how devoutly is it to be wished, that the moral world were under an authority as wise and as irresistible! But God has left man, as a free agent, to his own counsel; that, if he sees fit, he may break the laws, overturn the whole order of things, terrify the nations of the earth with "blood and

and fire and pillars of smoke;" which words do well describe the present state of war in this last age of the world.

The reason being now plain, why God hath appointed the rule of some over others; and it being fully shewn what a blessing it is, when this order is duly observed, and what misery follows when it is broken, we are now to examine what sort of people they are who *despise dominion.* Evil men you may be sure they must be; and in one respect they act wisely; they do well to hate government; for it is pointed against themselves. A great prilosopher of ancient Greece pronounced it impossible for man to be wise if he were not good; and he spoke the truth: for if you watch evil men closely, you will always discover that they are fools, and that their own tongues will make them fall; insomuch that he who seeth them shall laugh them to scorn. Our text therefore calls them *dreamers;* their opinions being as monstrous, as incoherent, as unprofitable, as ridiculous and as unaccountable, as those of men that are asleep. One of their first devices is this: when they cannot openly deny the necessity of Government to the good of man; they *speak evil of dignities;* they rail at the persons that exercise it: either

as

as persons weak in their understandings; or ill-intentioned; or insufficiently informed; or oppressive and tyrannical. If the laws cannot be spoken against (though they do this as often as they dare) they fall foul upon them that administer them, in order to make the laws themselves odious. The children of disobedience, who reject all authority, are particularly denominated as children of Belial, in whom he is said to work. Now if the Scripture tells us truly, that the spirit that is in us, our own human spirit, *lusteth to envy*, and that envy, and hatred which always attends it, are natural lusts of the mind; what must men become, when there is an Evil Spirit working within, to impel them, and inflame them, till their tongues (as the Apostle speaks) *are set on fire of hell?* Then does all manner of seditious language break forth and abound, with such vain boasting and vile abuse as honest men cannot account for: but the Evil Spirit knows what he intends by it: he knows, that as the fiery tongues of the gospel gave light and peace to the world, so *his* fiery tongues will spread discord and confusion, to the ends of the earth. All this

done directly, to raise discontents, and make
vernment itself an odious thing. Their next
is to overturn it, by propagating false
principles

principles among the people. I called them principles; but having no foundation, they really are dreams. The first is this, that every man has *rights;* which is said with this design, that every man may be discontented, and may turn the world upside down by contending for them.

There is no such thing in the world as the absolute right these persons talk about. There is no right without reason; and right will follow reason, so long as men speak sense. But in a dream, reason has no share; so we find little of it here. We must ask, in what *state* of man is this *right* to be found? Man can have no right before he is born. To his *birth* he has no right; for it is the gift of God that he comes into the world at all. In his infancy he may have a right to be fed and nursed, because he cannot feed himself: but then his parents also, so long as he is dependent upon them, have a right to his obedience and service. If as he grows up, he refuses to work, he has no right to eat. If as he grows up he cheats and steals, he has no right to be exempted from suffering punishment as a felon: if he commits murder, he has no right to escape the righteous sentence of death. I say these things to shew that rights are in every case, the rights of justice; that

the body in any one respect, and it is no longer a body, but a monster.* Are the men that can reason thus in a dream, or are they not? The man that is awake will know: but he who is himself dreaming will not. But if men were all born equal, like the blades of wheat in a field of corn; or if it were in the power of man to *make* them equal, nothing could *keep* them so. If all the lands of a country were equally divided, the share of a single man would be small; and how is a poor man to occupy it? To furnish himself with stock and implements of husbandry, he must part with some of his land, which immediately makes him unequal; and so the plan miscarries at the first step. They who have of late invented or revived this equality, are themselves a proof of its absurdity: has equality set them at ease? has it indeed ever taken place amongst them? By no means: they are ravaging and destroying the countries on three sides

* When the first republic of these last days was begotten by rebellion, (as all republics are) they were going to make a law that all men should be equal: "but hold," says one wiser than the rest, "you must make a law first, that ...e shall be industrious: for the industrious will soon be ...ve the idle, do whatever you will: and certain it is, ...ality can never be restored again till the idle robs the ...trious, and seizes the fruit of another's labour."

sides of them, and they would ravage this country if they could. It is with them as naturalists tell us it is with the kingdom of bees: if their chief be lost, the rest turn thieves, and plunder their neighbours as far as they can. This is exactly verified in the nation who of late destroyed their king; and it is a fact which ought to open the eyes of this whole nation: but when men are under the power of visions in a dream, realities have no effect.

But your enemies, knowing the wildness and weakness of their arguments, and not daring to trust their cause to them, have another deep device to practise upon you; in which, I must no longer say they dream, but shew how nearly they are related to the grand author of mischief, who never sleeps. If they cannot make you *foolish* all at once, they are persuaded they shall do it at last, if they begin with making you *wicked*. Therefore every art is tried to spread wickedness among you. You believe the word of God: that keeps you in the fear of God: and that fear will never suffer you to turn robbers and republicans. Therefore the bible, which stands in the way, must first be taken out of the way: Christianity must be ridiculed: argument, mockery, and blasphemy, rise all at once, to perplex you and corrupt you. To

SERMON IV.

Repentance necessary to our Salvation.

LUKE xiii, VERSE 8.

EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH.

ALL impenitent sinners will be puniſhed; but not immediately. Some are diſtinguiſhed, for an example to others: and if thoſe others do not take warning, they will then be doubly guilty, and deſerve a double puniſhment.

Some people of Judea had been killed at Siloam by the falling of a tower upon their heads; and others of Galilee had been cruelly ıghtered by Pilate. In ſuch caſes, it was manner of the Jews to argue, that if any ed puniſhment, it was a ſure ſign they were

were sinners; and if their punishment was great, that their sin must have been great also. But with this they had another dangerous opinion; viz. that if a man were *not* punished, then it would follow, that he was not a sinner; at any rate, not so great a sinner as those that were punished. This was one way they had of justifying themselves, by comparing themselves with other men. When they told our Saviour how the Galileans had suffered; partly with design to affront him as a supposed Galilean, and partly out of curiosity to hear what he would say, they put this question to him; "Master, what great sin had those Galileans committed, that they suffered such things?" He does not answer to their *curiosity*, (which signified nothing) but he answers to their *mistake*; letting them know, that those men had not been chosen for punishment because they were the greatest of sinners; but to give warning to other sinners, as great or greater than themselves, that without repentance they also would certainly perish at some time or other. A tower might not fall upon their heads, to kill them in the midst of their rioting, as was the case at Siloam; neither might the sword of a tyrant slay them; yet they might be assured, they should at length perish under the ven-

geance of God; and this vengeance had already fallen upon some as an earnest and example to all the rest.

If you consider with yourselves what it is to *perish*, that is, to be lost and miserable to eternity; and that you must either *perish* or *repent*; I think you will be ready to hear what I have to offer upon the subject; and if your minds should hitherto have been careless and dead upon it, you will awake, and hear what is to be said: for at some time or other you must awake; and how much better is it to be called out of your sleep by a *friend*, than to be awakened in the morning by the voice of an *executioner*, calling you to your death!

I shall have but little difficulty in making you understand what it is to *repent*, if you recollect the vow you made at your baptism, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are the three enemies, which draw men into sin, and by binding them down in it with a chain, hinder their repentance. The devil tempts you to pride, envy, malice, ignorance, cruelty, falsehood, and disobedience; by the last of which, I mean *rebellious undutifulness*. The world tempts you to covetousness, vanity, uit of pleasure, the love of shew and ice: and covetousness draws you into injustice,

injustice, fraud, oppression, and extortion. The flesh tempts you to excess, self-indulgence, sloth, intemperance, greediness, drunkenness, and all such sins as turn man into a beast; the worst of beasts, and the most odious, which is the swine.

The law of God in the ten commandments, as you have been taught in your catechism, is pointed against all these sins, and, the law of God being known, conscience will be sure to tell you how and when you depart from it; and it will so often set your offences before you, that it requires very little art and skill to try and examine yourselves according to the plain rule of God's commandments. Your heart, if you listen to it, will soon tell you how you stand, in respect to the law of God on the one hand, and to your three enemies and their works on the other. To repent, is to forsake them and their works, and turn to God and his law; not in your *words* only, but in your *hearts:* for so the catechism teaches; that by repentance we do not only confess sin, but *forsake* it.

I am convinced, that very little teaching is wanting to shew people what it is to forsake sin, and turn to God. Our Saviour says nothing about it in the text, but supposes his meaning to be sufficiently understood; and that nothing

is wanting in his hearers, but a due consideration of the motive, which should lead all men to repentance: that except they repent, they shall *perish*. What a terrible word is this, if we could understand it now, as it will be understood by sinners hereafter! But, as it is said of the things which God hath prepared for them that *love* him, that they are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive them; so may we say of those *other* things, which God hath prepared for them who *do not* love him, that they are such as our senses of seeing, and hearing, and conceiving, will not now enable us fully to understand. What it is to *perish*, can be known, so far only, as God has been pleased to reveal to us in his word. If it were possible for us to comprehend it in its full extent, the prospect might shock us to such a degree, as to strike us dead upon the spot with terror. But that would be of no use; it is not designed to fright us out of life, but to fright us out of sin. God grant that it may have its effect! The general sense of it is contained in those words of our Saviour concerning his sheep—I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never *perish*: so that to *perish*, lose eternal life; and, with that, all things able and delightful to man. It is hard for

for us to conceive what a spirit can be without life: but you may have some understanding of it, if you consider that there is even in this world a life which is no life; with which when death is compared, it is preferred, and often chosen, as the better of the two. Many there are to be found, who live only to feel misery; who breathe only to utter sighs and groans: and when the body is thus overloaded with infirmity, the faculties of the mind are of little use. When the strength of the body is gone, the spirit is also broken, and no longer capable of exerting itself any further, than barely to be sensible of its own suffering. What is such a life as this, but a daily death? And if we were to say of such a person, that he dies every day, the meaning of the expression would immediately be understood by those who are made acquainted with the case. We are then to conceive, that the spirit which loses eternal life, lives only to suffer and to be miserable. It lives, but without the powers and comforts of life. It is separated from Christ, the Light of the world; and having lost him, finds nothing but the darkness of despair. It is separated from the Spirit, whose name is the Comforter, and its misery can find no alleviation. Being thus divided from the Light and Spirit of the Lord,

Lord, the divine presence can be manifested to it only as a *consuming fire*, such as God is said to be to the wicked: it will never be blessed with a prospect of that place which Christ hath prepared for his disciples: it will never be admitted to the society of angels, and just men made perfect; but will be sent away to join the blaspheming crew of fallen angels; and be tormented with those, for whom torment was made. These are some of those terrors of the Lord, by the preaching of which the apostles *persuaded men*; that is, persuaded them to repent, and fly from the wrath to come. And perhaps, they that hear me now may think it necessary they should repent: perhaps they form a resolution that they *will* repent. So did Felix; and thought he might find a proper season for it; but that season never came: "Go thy way, for this time, (said he to Paul,) when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Thus it generally happens: for, as Felix never found a time, so the man who doth not enter upon a new course of life, the moment he is convinced that such a course is necessary, never enters upon it at all: if he suffers himself once to cool upon the subject, all things are against him, and he will never be warm any more: if he can put off

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his repentance, he will never repent at all: and I will give you my reasons, why I think he will not.

1. Man brings with him a corrupt nature into the world: he is more inclined to evil than to good. One bad example can draw him further into a life of wickedness, and prevail more for his destruction, than twenty good ones for his reformation. One corrupting discourse from a seducing companion will instil more evil into his mind, than twenty demonstrations from the pulpit will be able to overcome: this is my first reason.

2. When sin becomes habitual to the mind, the case is daily altering for the worse. There is a double disadvantage; sin grows stronger, and the mind grows weaker: on which account, he who does not resist his sin to-day, will be less able to do it to-morrow. It is the same with sin as with sickness. All men know, that in the case of bodily sickness, it is of the utmost importance to seize the first opportunity of a cure. Some trifling remedy may be sufficient now; but after a few days, not all the remedies in the world; and so the case is a lost one.

3. The Scripture represents it as an impossibility to change a habit of evil for a habit of good:

first to be broken up by the plough; then it is to be sown; then follow the blades of corn; at firſt they are tender, and remain long upon the ground before the ears of corn are found upon them. This is a process which begins in the spring, and is not finished till late in the summer. It is thus with the Christian; the fallow ground of his heart must be broken up by true contrition, before the seed of God's word which falls upon it can spring up, and bear fruit. Yet there are some people, who think they can be Christians all at once, when they please to find time for it. You never heard of a field that was ploughed, and sown, and full grown, and fit to be reaped, and all this in one day: and you never yet saw a Christian, who attained all at once to the life of grace. At the creation of the world, plants grew up instantly at the word of God; but no farmer of any sense expects that such a thing will happen *now*. So, at the beginning of the gospel, Paul, by a miracle of which he had no expectation, and against his own will, was a complete Christian in a few days: but the like is not to be expected now, any more than that God should raise up the fruits of the earth as he did at the creation of the world. As he uld be a foolish husbandman, who should neglect

neglect his land, and let the weeds grow till midsummer, and presume that God will give him a crop by a miracle at the harvest; so must he needs be a foolish Christian, who puts off the great work of reformation to the close of his life, till the opportunity, and the accepted season of grace, is lost: who thinks the good seed of God's word may take effect in a heart, where sin has been striking its roots deeper and deeper every year: who thinks, that the religion of Christ may be learned at a time of life, when few men, who had not learned them before, would be able to learn their letters: who can flatter himself, that he may be entitled to the reward of good works, after his life has been spent in filling up the measure of his iniquities.

Christian reformation then is a work of time; and the man who puts it off to another day will not be reformed at all, unless by a miracle of grace; which he hath no reason to expect; whose vain presumption is a tempting of God to transgress the laws of his juſtice, in favour of an impenitent sinner, who hath so long trifled with the offers of his mercy and goodness. Repentance, at whatever season it comes, is the *gift of God*; and St. Paul makes it very doubtful whether God will grant it at all times, even

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to those that *ask* it: for to some whom he adviseth to pray for it, he uses these remarkable words, IF *God peradventure will give them repentance:* as if there were no rule nor promise to render it certain, that every sort of offender might have it for asking. St. Peter expreſſes the same doubt in the case of Simon Magus: "*repent therefore of this thy wickedneſs, and pray God,* IF PERHAPS *the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*" But the most terrible of all to this purpose is the declaration of God by Solomon; whence it may certainly be inferred, that the dilatory presumptuous sinner, who has dared to try the patience of God, by refusing to hear him, shall at laſt find no place for repentance and acceptance. "*Becauſe I have called and ye refused, I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Therefore seek God while he *may* be found: refuse not to hear him at the *first* call; for after that refusal, you know not what the second may be: death and judgment may be the only things remaining to you.

We often see how dreadfully they are disappointed, who deceive themselves with the assurance of future opportunities, when there can be

be no such assurance. Two things are requisite toward a true repentance, time and ability, neither of which are in our power; both are in the hands of God. I look upon it as a sure sign of repentance, when a person thinks of the blessed sacrament, who never thought of it before, and is desirous of preparing his mind for it by prayer and a serious examination of his conscience, as the Church of England directs, in her exhortations to the people. That person I consider as a true penitent, who is forsaking his sins, and putting himself in a way of salvation; and I pray to God to help him forward and give him perseverance. But I have met with those, who seemed to have formed a good intention to do their duty, yet have put off the performance for the present, and said in their hearts, "Not this time; the next will do very well;" but, alas, before the *next time* came, I have seen them seized with sudden incapacity, and hurried without warning into their grave; where every farther opportunity was lost, and while their great account remained unsettled.

On the other hand, if I see a man, who from time to time can hear the exhortations, the solemn, and earnest, and affectionate exhortations of the Church, to bring the congregation

to the holy communion, and pay no regard to them; I am sure that man does not repent; and I have all the reason in the world to fear and believe, that he *never intends* it. What is to become of him hereafter, when he shall make his appearance before the tribunal of Christ, we do not yet see: but I can tell you what generally comes of him here; (I say *generally*; for we must not presume to make a certain rule for the searcher of hearts to follow:) generally then it happens to such a person, that he dies as insensible as he lives; and when death gives him warning, that warning is not taken. He who has hardened his ears against the language of the Church, does at last not understand the language of death, though it speaks loud enough and plain enough for every body else to understand it. For it is the endeavour of Satan, after he has deceived a sinner all his life, to deceive him at his death, and make him as insensible of his bodily, as he has always been of his spiritual danger: so that when his neighbours and friends see him sinking apace out of life, his head is filled with nothing but thoughts of this world: he is contriving how some business all be done a month or a year hence, and rhaps at some greater distance. He determines

mines in his sickness, what a man dare not determine in his health, if he has any wisdom about him. If it happens that he is aware of his ill state, then he is amused with hopes of recovery: his old Enemy suggests to him, that he is not in such danger as people think him; that there is but a very little between him and health; and with these vain expectations he is buoyed up, till his last breath undeceives him. This is the common end of one who has hardened himself against the grace of God, and lived in the total neglect of repentance, or put it off to the time of his death: he and his intended repentance go on and on, from time to time, till they drop both together into another world, wherein there is no repentance.

If then, my brethren, the text assures every sinner, that he must either repent or perish; and if a careless life ends in an impenitent and hopeless death; my lesson after this may be short. If the sinner would try to be saved, he must try *now;* and he must be as quick as he can: he must *flee* from the wrath to come. He must be as much in haste, as he would be, if he were running with the family of Lot, and saw Sodom on fire behind him. For the same fire is now pursuing every sinner, whether he sees it or not; and unless the saving angels

shall lead him by the hand to Zoar, it will certainly overtake him. There is no time for loitering: you must escape for your life with all speed, or be lost: Sodom was intended to shew you that; where one faithless soul, by loitering, *was* lost.

Let no man therefore deceive himself with any vain expectation, that though he is not such as he could wish at present, he shall be so, at some future time: that if he is not prepared to meet his God now, he shall be so, before he dies. This is the delusion under which so many perish. The broad way to hell is crouded with people, who intended to grow better, but never did. When once they have this habit of loitering, as they live, so they die: nothing makes any difference in them but death; AND THAT MAKES A GREAT DIFFERENCE.

Now to God, &c.

SERMON

SERMON V.

Paul and Elymas.

ACTS xiii. 6.

AND WHEN THEY HAD GONE THROUGH THE ISLE UNTO PAPHOS, THEY FOUND A CERTAIN SORCERER, A FALSE PROPHET, A JEW, WHOSE NAME WAS BAR-JESUS.

THE great apostle of the Gentiles is here in the course of that mission, on which he was sent by the Church of Antioch. It is a circumstance worthy of observation, that the same Paul, who had been appointed to the ministry by Jesus Christ himself in person, and who had his call and ordination from heaven, should yet be sent out like other men according to the forms of the Church. An order came from the Holy Ghost to them of Antioch, that they

separate (that is consecrate*) Barnabas and Saul; and accordingly they fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, and sent them away. After this, where is the man that shall pretend to a call from heaven, without a call from the Church, as sufficient to constitute a preacher of the gospel; when it was not sufficient in the case of Paul himself? To prevent disorder, it is the will of God, that the authority and rule of his Church should in all cases be preserved: so the Church sends out even where God himself hath separated already; to the end that no man, under any circumstances whatever, may be independent of the Christian society. The apostle might have objected to this "laying on of hands," as unnecessary in his case, who had been consecrated already by an higher authority: but God acts by the Church which he has appointed, for the preservation of order and the preventing of imposture; and charity, which *seeketh not her own*, will never claim any private rights in opposition to it. St. Paul, therefore, who had been sent forth from heaven, was sent forth by the Church in company with Barnabas. It had been the custom of Christ to send out his disciples upon the work of ministry by two and two, and thence we

* See Numb. xvi. 9.

we hear one of them calling his companion a *true yoke-fellow:* in conformity with which custom, Paul and Barnabas were sent together; who travelled from Antioch to Seleucia, and thence took ship to the island of Cyprus; where, at Salamis, in the synagogues which the Jews had in that place, they exercised their ministry: and, proceeding from thence, they went through the island to Paphos, which lay at the other extremity of it. In their progress, they must have said and done many things, which had already made them well known to the people: and in all probability the fame of their preaching had reached the place long before they arrived thither: in consequence of which, we are not to wonder that Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, was desirous to hear what so many others of the people had heard before him: he therefore called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God; and being himself a man of sense and prudence, with a mind open to conviction, the word of God was likely to have its effect, and make a convert of him. But here an accident intervenes, which is far from being uncommon; a certain man, who has an interest against the truth, throws himself across the way to hinder its progress; there seems

to be some such mischievous blasphemous pe
son ready in all places; permitted by Go
and provided by the Devil; provided to res
the truth; permitted to make it shine mo
bright; as truth seldom fails to do, when
meets with malicious opposition. Thus wh
Moses presented himself to Pharaoh, the m
gicians withstood him; with design to confu
his wisdom by their philosophy, and to equ
his miracles by their enchantments. This m
seems to have been partly of the same chara
ter: the text calls him a *sorcerer*; nearly t
same thing with an enchanter; and so far
is an heathenized magician; with that nar
of *Magus*, which is given only to the wise m
of the heathen religion. There is a portento
mixture in this man's character; for he wh
as a magician, is an heathen, is also a Je
and is called *Bar-Jesus*, which is a Jewi
name. A Jew, free from prejudice, a
learned in scriptures of the first covenant, w
of all others best qualified to hear and r
ceive the gospel of Christ; but this was a Je
fit for nothing but unbelief: because a Je
turned heathen, would be much worse than
native heathen: his Judaism, being of a sp
rious malignant kind, would be all again
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the truth. From his being acquainted, as a companion, with the proconsul, we may also judge that he was a person of some figure, one who had probably the repute of a learned education, such as qualified him to be in the society of the superior class of people. Such a man as this could foresee nothing but the total ruin of his own character in the doctrines of the gospel; therefore it was improbable that he would receive them himself; and he was determined that no one else, as far as his influence went, should receive them. So he withstood the apostles, and either by his arguments, or his sneers, or his lies, sought to prevail with Sergius not to listen to them. In such a case as this what does the apostle do? I can tell you what he would probably have done, had he lived in this civil half-believing age: when it is the fashion not to stand up for the authority of God, for fear of being reputed an high-churchman; nor to be too sure of any thing, lest you should give offence to those, who find it convenient to be sure of nothing, and say, they cannot think as you do: so with the influence of our times upon him, he might have observed, "that the learned philosopher "would be of another opinion if he would but "permit him to lay the case before him; that he "had

"had many things to say, which his opponent "had probably not well considered." This was not the apostle's manner: he knew that nothing but the Devil could resist the gospel; that nothing but darkness could be opposite to light; so he makes the man no fair speeches; but tells him and his friends in plain terms what he thinks of him, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief; thou child of the Devil; thou enemy of all righteousness; wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" The ways of the Lord are the ways of truth, and the ways of truth are strait: this man wanted to make them appear crooked and false; and the apostle seeing that this was his design, had no mercy upon him; but gave him his real character at once. And from this example, we have a rule for our own conduct in like cases. Where persons err through ignorance, or cannot see properly for want of light, we are to make a proper difference, and treat them with all gentleness: but if they pretend to be wiser than wisdom, and wish not to see by the light, but to put it out that nobody else may see by it: in short, if their design is bad, then we are never to spare them; ve are never to be tender to malice; for that the same as to be cruel to all true men: therefore,

fore, there are cases, when the difference between good and evil must be expressed without reserve. Our power upon such occasions can be shewn only in words; but the words of the apostle were confirmed by a miracle; and that so remarkable that there is nothing more so. Consider, that truth is light; and that this man resisted the light of truth: therefore the apostle for a season consigned him to a state of darkness, in order that he himself and all present might know what he had done. Christ is the Sun of righteousness; and he who will not own his light is not fit to see the light of heaven. The punishment is exactly apposite to the crime: all who will not see the gospel, deserve no other. All are not struck blind; for that is not necessary, nor would it be expedient: but one is here struck blind for a warning to the rest. This Bar-Jesus, or Elymas, was probably one of those who called themselves the *illuminated*: perhaps he would not have refused the gospel, had he not in opinion had a better light of his own. Woe be unto them, therefore, who *think* they see: no men are in a worse state than they: you see their fate in this man: his bodily blindness is a pattern of their spiritual blindness; and there is nothing more terrible in this world.

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What a remarkable judgment is here upon unbelief! You may argue upon it, and say, surely it must have changed his opinion. When he perceived, that for resisting the gospel he lost his eyesight, that must immediately have convinced him of his mistake, and he must have been converted to the truth: but this was not the case: we do not find, that it wrought any difference in him. He makes no confession of his sin; he utters neither prayer nor cry for mercy; but goes about seeking for some to lead him by the hand. He can direct his feet no longer; that seems to be his concern: he wants somebody to lead him, that he may find his way home: as for finding the way to truth, he is as far from it as ever; he had an hatred towards it, and had purposely withstood and prevented it; and therefore did this evil come upon him. Where wickedness is in the *manners* of a sinner, his mind may be rectified, and that will mend his manners: but when the wickedness is in the *mind*, there is little hope: it is not a departure from God and goodness through the prevailing lusts of the flesh; but it is a *hatred* of them; and then there is no remedy. St. Paul calls him by his true name, "*thou child of the Devil;*" and for this reason the miracle has no effect upon him;

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he that is a devil, will continue to be a devil. This is a fearful consideration; and it is a doctrine which it highly behoves us to understand.

The character of this wretch is very instructive: it shews us what sort of people there are in the world; men whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded: whose minds are actually incapable of receiving the light of truth. This man was by profession a Jew; but with it, was a Sorcerer, and a false prophet: and have not we as strange characters amongst us? Put together another composition of the same kind; instead of the Jew, and the false prophet, and the sorcerer; say, a Christian, and a Socinian, and a philosopher: how often do these meet together? and when they do meet, they form as strange a character as that of Elymas: a Christian, but no more of a Christian than Elymas was of a Jew; a Sorcerer, big with conceit about the mysteries of nature; a false prophet, denying as false what the Scripture reveals to be true: and teaching that the Lord of Glory is a mere man like ourselves; that the writers to whom the Holy Ghost dictated were not inspired; that man neither hath nor wants any redemption in Jesus Christ: with other things of the same kind; so hurtful to man,

man, and so contrary to truth, that no Jew, no sorcerer, no false prophet, could teach worse.

If St. Paul had met with one of these, he would certainly have addressed him as he did Elymas; he would have accused him of subtlety and mischief, and called him a child of the devil, whatever his companions might have wished to call him: they, perhaps, would have extolled and magnified him, as a great, a learned, an ingenious man, wonderful in wisdom and knowledge: and so, very probably, was this man reputed by people at the island of Cyprus; if he had not been eminent in his way, he would scarcely have been encouraged by Sergius Paulus, the chief person of the place: and with this man, prudent as he was, the sorcerer might have succeeded, and turned him away from the faith, if it had not been for the miracle which was wrought in his sight. For no sooner was Elymas made blind, than the deputy, seeing what was done, believed what he had heard, being astonished at the word of the Lord: he was astonished at the miracle, and he believed what was *so* confirmed. The power that made one man blind, opened the eyes of another; and this was the way in which it pleased God to bring men to the gospel. When the wisdom of man thinks

about the right way of bringing us to truth, it thinks a different way from this. Man tells us, we must be *reaſoned* with; we must have it *proved* to us, that a doctrine is reasonable before we believe it; and that if it does not appear reasonable, we ought not to receive it at all. This is absurd and impossible: the gospel could never have been propagated in that manner: there was no time for it. Sergius Paulus, to whom our apostle addressed himself, was an heathen; and to convert him by reasoning, he must have proceeded methodically, and have brought him first to an understanding of the Old Testament; of the religion of the law, and the writings of the prophets: he must have made a Jew of him first; then he must have argued from the agreement of the events of the goſpel, with what had been foreshewed, and foretold in the ſcriptures before; and this course of instruction would have required a long time: and, what is worst of all, it might not have succeeded at last; for man is not in a condition to be taught this way: till God works upon him by his grace, he can be nothing more than a natural man; and we are told the *natural man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God; for they are foolishneſs unto him:* they seem

seem to be all wrong: it is contrary to man's pride, and lust, and covetousness, to receive and follow a crucified Saviour. Nature and reaſon can never be brought to this, without being conquered by some power which the senses cannot resist; and when the word of God comes forward in this manner, then it is received. The proconsul was *astonished* when he saw what was done by the hand of the Lord; and then he believed what was said by his minister, and became a christian.

This is God's way of converting the world to the truth; but man would have it all done by *reasoning*. When a man has received it, he may see that it is all reasonable, and be in love with the wisdom of it, and even give up his life for the truth of it; but for all this, he is not indebted to his own reason or nature, but to the power of God, by which his reaſon is taken captive. Upon the evidence of miracles, the world at first received the gospel; and when parents have it and understand it, they will teach it diligently to their children, who receive it before they can reason upon it. Let them be neglected and left in ignorance till they are grown up, and then see whether their reason will ever take to it. I fear it will not; for the children of bad parents are generally

generally bad themselves: not *always*; because the goodness of God can find other ways of bringing them to the truth, and putting them into the way of salvation: but the ordinary way, after the first establishment of the gospel by miracles, is by education and instruction; and woe to parents that neglect it! they will suffer in a twofold sense; in their own persons, and in the persons of their impenitent children.

We have now gone through the particulars of this wonderful narrative. We have seen how the power of the word of God wrought by his apostle. We have seen a wise man (for such without doubt the sorcerer thought himself) made blind; and a prudent man brought over to the gospel, which he wanted to know, from what he had heard. Before we leave the subject, I would point out some few things which are most worthy to be laid up in our minds.

1. The Apostle of the Gentiles makes a great appearance upon this occasion, and acts in that honourable character, under which he ought always to be remembered. We are told how God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; and that wrought upon the sorcerer was a *special miracle*, great in itself, and instruc-

tive to those who consider it. The progress of the apostle through the isle of Cyprus shews us with what power the gospel made its way in the world. This island was an accursed place: it was one of the grand seats of heathenish delusion, where Satan might be said to have established his throne; and yet, in this place, all the power of the enemy gives way to the gospel. The preachers begin at Salamis, and publish the word in the synagogues of the Jews there: they begin, as it was their constant custom, with the Jews, and thence go through the isle, working and preaching as they go, though the particulars are not related; and coming at length to Paphos, that grand mart of idolatry, they find this Sergius Paulus, an heathen, desirous to hear, and disposed to receive the word of God. They come to him, and enter upon their employment: but here is a man in the way that would hinder them; this Elymas would turn away the deputy from the faith. He was a prudent man, and able to see and to judge: why could not he leave him to himself? But this wicked men can never do; they can never let people alone; they expect that all men should be like themselves, and are as earnest for a lie, as an apostle is for the truth. The Devil is

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always active and zealous; he never suffers the truth to prosper, if he can help it; and his children are like him: they are full of subtlety and art to do mischief: but let them be as cunning as they will, God and his truth are above them.

When you see what this man does, you must expect that others will be doing the same to the end of the world; and you ought never to be staggered in your belief by the tempers and actions of the enemies of the truth. All men will not love truth; many are adverse to it, and to God for being the author of it; which is a most lamentable consideration. Even a miracle, which brings astonishment and conviction upon some, will have no effect upon others. They go on just as they did before: when this man is made blind, all he seeks is to be led by the hand, that he may find his way: he makes no reflexions, and receives no benefit. It was thus with the men of Sodom. When they had beset the house of righteous Lot, they carried on the assault after they were struck blind: they still "wearied themselves to find the door," and were as intent upon mischief as ever. The sufferer in the parable thought that a miracle would be the saving of his wicked brethren: but he judged falsely; for

if men who have the Scriptures do not hear them, their heart is wrong, and then a miracle would have no effect.

Now in the last place, remember, that the man, who would not see, lost the use of his eyes. Beware, lest the like misfortune should befal any of you; lest, by neglecting the light while it is shining in your eyes, you should be able at last to see nothing. Never turn away from the truth, lest the truth ſhould turn away from you, and leave you in eternal darkness. Cultivate every gift that you have, and it will be increased: use what light you have, and God will open your eyes to see more: he that can see great things, shall see greater. If you read the Scripture, and desire to understand it, some new light will come in upon you, and will enable you to understand it better. When once the inclination is discovered, it will be encouraged and assisted. Sergius Paulus *called* for Barnabas and Saul; and then all those great things followed, about which I have been discoursing to you. Philip the Evangelist was sent to the Ethiopian nobleman in the wilderness; but then you are to observe, that he was sent to a man, who had already got a bible in his hand, and who wished to hear it interpreted.

God

God will act by the same rules now, by which he acted in former ages: these examples of the scriptures will certainly be fulfilled in you. If you hate the light, as Elymas did, you will become blind and lose it: if you rejoice in it, and use it, it will increase more and more unto the perfect day; that is, till the light of truth shall lead to the light of life eternal; for which end God sent it from heaven, and spread it over the world.

SERMON VI.

Ahithophel the Suicide.

2 SAM. xvii. 23.

AND WHEN AHITHOPHEL SAW THAT HIS COUNSEL WAS NOT FOLLOWED, HE SADDLED HIS ASS, AND AROSE, AND GAT HIM HOME TO HIS HOUSE, TO HIS CITY, AND PUT HIS HOUSEHOLD IN ORDER, AND HANGED HIMSELF, AND DIED.

SELF-MURDER is a subject, the consideration of which can never be impertinent or unseasonable in a Christian congregation: because in setting forth the causes of that dreadful crime, and in recommending preservatives, we may secure people from many of those lesser evils which lead to it; evils, which every wise man will be glad to avoid. The same rules

rules which are sufficient to save a man from death, may save him also from a burning fever; for which he will have great reason to be thankful. One of the best methods I can think of for the understanding of this crime is, to examine the nature of it, as it appears to us upon the record of historical truth. Example shews more than reasoning or precept will teach without it: I shall therefore proceed to explain the subject from the example which the bible hath set before us in the remarkable case of Ahithophel.

When we see ruin and destruction brought upon the soul of any man, much good may certainly done by dissecting his character. Dissection is a disagreeable operation: to learn from the actual inspection of a dead human subject is a hard trial to a tender mind. But if the corpse is that of a malefactor, justly put to death, for some hateful treason, or some inhuman practice, the mind is more easily reconciled to it. The wretch, who, when alive had defaced in himself the image of God, is no longer to be considered as a man. The person now under our consideration was a malefactor of the basest kind in his life time: we may therefore very properly dissect him, and learn what we can from him.

All the circumstances prove that this man was no lunatic; that he acted with as much deliberation against his own life, as if he had been lying in wait for the life of any other man. He committed his own murder with the same foresight as he would have committed any other wickedness. He "set his house in order;" that is, he settled his affairs, he made his will as a person of sound mind and memory; as he would have done, if death had been coming upon him in a natural way. The case is therefore unexceptionable of the kind; such as we may safely make use of for discovering that internal state of a wicked mind, which terminates in the fatal crime of self-murder.

We discover in the first place, that he was a man of *bad principles*; by which I mean such principles as do not restrain, but give encouragement to the bad passions of pride, covetousness, and ambition; which is the nature of those principles which are not of God, but are of man, and of the world. When a man of these principles gains the world, in its wealth, its fame, its honour, or its power, he gets all he wants; when he loses it, he loses all he seeks for; there is nothing left for him. A worldly-minded man commonly grows up under

der worldly parents; who set an unprofitable example in their own conduct, and place before the minds of their children no great and worthy objects: for it must be a very bad mind indeed that gives the preference to this world, when it has been taught the value of the other. And we have in this Ahithophel a man who was in no want of a capacity to learn; he was not ignorant for want of an understanding; on the contrary, he had obtained the repute of great wisdom: *The counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.* It is often found too true by experience, that persons of superior penetration and wisdom are of bad intentions: they see further than other men, and are under a temptation to turn their minds to the overreaching of others, and effecting mischief: their ability in accomplishing wickedness is a snare and a temptation to them: they find they *can* do it, and therefore are ready and *willing* to do it. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light: they study causes and effects as to things of this life, and can conjecture what will be, and what will not be, with more precision than persons whose minds are employed upon higher things. If any man was at a loss in a difficult

difficult case, here was the man who could tell him how to act for the best; he was like an oracle; his *judgment* was never under a mistake: but he made a great mistake in one respect; as we may learn from his own case. We may suppose he would be as exact for himself, as for any other person: but when he calculated for himself, it appears, that he left God out of the question. Providence made no part of his plan. He considered with great sagacity how *he* was to act; but he never considered how God would act: and therefore all his wise designs must have been very defective. "I will act so and so," says the man of the world: but he never asks himself, "how will God act?" The rich man said, "I shall want room for my stores; I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and then I can do as I please." But the gospel calls him a fool, for not considering that God might call him out of the world that night, and that then all his schemes of happiness and prosperity would die with him. Such is he who is wise without God; and such was this Ahithophel. He had no regard either to the ways of God or the laws of God; for he advised Absalom to commit such horrible wickedness against his father's house as could never be forgiven, that the

the people might be sure there could never be a reconciliation between them, and thereby might be confirmed in their rebellion. All this he did without scruple, as a wise politician; and his advice, though very wicked in itself, was good advice for promoting the ends he had in view. A politician may be a good man: but then, I am afraid, he will be a bad politician; because there are cases, in these evil days, in which a man of nice virtue will be apt to miscarry. So practically and experimentally true is it, as we said before, that the children of this world are in their generation *wiser* than the children of light.

But now we proceed to consider, that this wise man was soon after under great mortification and disappointment. His pride, his vanity, his ambition, were *all* disappointed. He knew he had given the best advice for the destruction of the king and his party; but he found that the worse advice was preferred, and foresaw that it would be the ruin of Absalom and of his cause. He had entered into the conspiracy with a persuasion that his advice would be taken; that he should continue to be the great oracle he had hitherto been: but his purpose was frustrated; that hurt his pride; and when the worse counsel was preferred to the

from time to time have helped to bring ruin upon many a man. A leader of sedition, let him be ever so wise, has bad designs: to the execution of bad designs bad people are necessary, and, therefore, such a sort of person soon finds himself in the midst of them; they encourage him, and he makes his use of them, and so they work together to fulfil some wise ends of Providence, which it is hard for us to understand, till it pleases God to bring the authors of evil to destruction. "That which is now is that which hath been." Look at any leader of rebellion in these days, and you will find him an ungodly man, a man of no principles; and who are they that follow him? Are they not in general as bad as himself? No man that has the fear of God will unite himself with such a party: his conscience will keep him from it; but if that were not sufficient, the expectation of wrath and vengeance, which (however slow its approach) certainly comes at last, would deter him from the undertaking. He that joins the wicked will come to the end of the wicked; and, of late days, we have been witness to many strange examples of this: we have seen party after party, in a neighbouring country, rising up, one after another, and triumphing for a while in murder and oppression,

sion, but in time as effectually cut off as if it had been done by virtue of a death warrant sent down upon them from heaven. Some, and they not a few, seeing their own wicked designs defeated, have laid violent hands upon themselves, like Ahithophel, sending themselves out of the world because their wickedness was unsuccessful. If I were to attempt an history of those whom ill company has brought to destruction, it would be a black catalogue! O beware then how you join any bad party: let no Absalom beguile you with fair and flattering ſpeeches; he is in the way to ruin himself, and you may soon be ruined along with him. Absalom and Ahithophel both perished, as we see, in a strange manner: the judgment of God hanged up the one in a tree by the hair of his head, and the other hanged himself.

It seems, further, to have been the case of our traitor, that he never opened his grief to any body; in which respect he was a more sullen sinner than Judas his successor; for Judas, in the agony of his mind, *did* speak out, and said, "I have betrayed the innocent blood."—He spoke it indeed to those who gave him no comfort, but left him to his distress; as it often happens among partners in iniquity: they are no "sons of consolation;" but, when calamity comes among

among them, they leave one another to desperation and death. Indeed how can a man give comfort to another, who has none for himself? He who has wicked friends, can expect nothing but to be cast off and forsaken at last; and he is therefore debarred from that salutary relief of a troubled mind, the opportunity of telling its burthens and sufferings to a faithful counsellor; without which, and for the want of which, the mind of the wretched has been so frequently lost. The *soul* that cannot speak its grief, is in a like situation with the *body* when it is pent up in a close room; it is suffocated with its own smoke; it dies of a fulness which has no relief; as when the body is lost by an apoplexy, which might have been saved by a timely use of the lancet, to lessen the quantity of the fluids. As the apoplexy is prevented by the opening of a vein, and by other seasonable evacuations, so the mind becomes lighter and more tolerable to itself, if it can but throw off outwardly some of that noxious matter with which it is inwardly overcharged. This relief is so natural and necessary to the case, that reason can no more invent a *substitute* for it than the art of medicine can cure palsies, apoplexies, surfeits, and inflammations, without lessening the quantity of blood. When a person goes

goes with a sick body to a physician, he must describe his ailments, and tell all the symptoms under which he suffers; without which, it is impossible for the physician to take such a course as will restore him to health. This parallel suggests to us, that the proper person to whom the griefs of the mind should be opened, is he whose profession makes him the physician of the soul. The practice of consulting a spiritual counsellor, and confessing of sins, was too much discountenanced at the Reformation; and the Clergy are so much disused to the custom of giving private advice, that many of them are less prepared for the office than might be expected. An opportunity of this kind is, indeed, still allowed to the people; and, upon a particular occasion, we invite them to come to us, and *open their grief:*—But who ever comes? few, very few, indeed. If a clergyman has any knowledge of physic, the people will be ready to apply to him for advice; and if they do not in the other case, what can we infer, but that souls are either perfect and well, or that if they are of no value? In the person of Ahithophel we see a man brought into the extremity of misfortune, with neither inclination nor opportunity to open his mind. He is sullen and silent, and he falls a sacrifice to his wicked

wicked temper. Any one may see from the particulars which I have stated, that he was a man of no religion from the beginning: this world was the grand object of his attention and affection; the pride of his own wisdom had filled his heart; the desire of greatness had raised his expectations; and to humour his pride, and gratify his expectations, he was ready for any thing. A change of government seemed to promise what he wanted; and he was upon the high road toward the fulfilling of his wishes. He had formed some promising schemes; but they were not better than airy visions — mere cobwebs, which the hand of Providence, when it interfered, swept away at a stroke! Disappointment came upon him in a form he little expected; his counsel, which had been so highly valued, was now set at nought; and in consequence of that, all his projects were ruined. This wise Ahithophel was taken in his own craftiness; disgrace and punishment were before him; and for a man like him there was no refuge but in despair. From his example we may learn what is the common, and, as I may call it, the *natural* way to his fatal end. When a man lives without God, and has formed no expectations in another life, but has deluded himself with wicked hopes in this

world, and they are all disappointed; then life becomes insupportable, and he throws it away. Some destroy themselves in a gust of rage and passion before they have time to think (and may God have mercy upon them!) but the hardened atheist dies with deliberation and forethought, like the sinner in the text, who seems to have placed himself beyond the reach of divine mercy.

As religion lessens, despair increases; and when the true religion of Christianity decays, the false wisdom of heathenism prevails. There is therefore in this age much more of the crime of suicide (or self-murder) than there was in the last, and there will probably be more in the next than in this: for which some reasons may be given; and it may be of use to make them known. Men corrupt one another by their foolish mistakes, which pass among themselves for a sort of wisdom. It is now the fashion to dislike the authority of law and justice, and to be tender to crimes under the name of misfortunes, though it be notorious that a sinner wilfully brings them upon himself. There are laws intended to render self-murder infamous, that men may abhor it, and be deterred from the commission of it; and history informs us, that by a shew of severity

rity toward the dead, the living have been preserved. By false indulgence toward the dead, the living may be lost; and often are so; a circumstance which neither reason, nor law, nor piety will justify. Some destroy themselves who are out of their minds, in a state of lunacy, not being accountable for their own actions; of such the law takes no account: but when a man, like this Ahithophel of the Scripture, discovers every sign of sobriety and deliberation, and brings himself to a fatal end by trusting to the world instead of trusting to God, it must have a very bad effect to make such a man innocent by calling him a lunatic: the persons who give such a verdict are PERJURED; the justice of the country is insulted; the public is abused and corrupted; and no good is done to the dead; the difference is all to the living. False mercy, or compassion against reason, notwithstanding the applauses it may find from the ignorant, is cruelty; the worst of cruelty, because it is lasting: it promotes and multiplies the misery of posterity.

It is farther to be lamented, that the representations of poetry have tended very much to the corruption of the times. The world admires wit, though it is not agreeable to truth; considering that the end of such wit

is misery and madness. The stage has often done mischief, but never more than in a well-known tragedy, wherein self-murder appears with all the reputation of Roman courage, and all the wisdom of heathenish philosophy; because the politics of the time when that tragedy appeared were thought to require, that this sullen, sour republican should be brought out for a pattern of patriotism. The truth of the matter is no other than this; the pride of that man would not bear to see that the greatest man in the world was greater than himself: so he wounded himself with his own sword for envy and disappointment; and when his wound was dressed by those who wished to save his life, he tore it open, and died wallowing in his blood. All this foul rage of republican enthusiasm is turned into a fine scene of patriotic virtue; the man dies with honour, and the guilt of his blood is laid upon the world; that is, in effect, upon the providence of God, which raised Cæsar to be Emperor of Rome. This artifice has been attended with fatal effects: the story thus disguised has been adopted as a noble precedent, and pleaded as a sufficient *reason* by persons who have destroyed themselves; of which I might give you several examples, and some of them very striking.

When

When the imaginations of men are thus wrought upon by false pictures, and fine verses, there is very little difference between poetry and poison: only the sin is greater in poisoning the mind than in poisoning the body.

Another artist of the same profession commemorates the death of a certain lady, who murdered herself because she had entertained a criminal passion, in which she was disappointed, and could not bear it. Here is a precious picture for a poet to work upon. In the first place, her crime is misfortune: instead of guilty and desperate, she is called *unfortunate:* then, the self-murderer is made an honourable character, because it is *Roman*, and as such must be great and brave: her desires were the more noble for being unlawful, for so were the desires of Lucifer; and therefore her mind had in it the greatness of an angel*; that is, of a fallen angel, a devil: in the ground where she is buried, she is pronounced to rest in peace; and angels make it holy by spreading their wings over it. These are called flowers of poetry, but they are in reality the poisonous weeds of a wild and ungodly imagination. What grandeur and sublimity is here given to those unrestrained passions which

* See Note 1, at the end.

ruin the world, and make a hell upon earth! Take these sentiments out of their poetical dress, and they are no better than madness and blasphemy; but in it, they dazzle the eyes of the vain and unthinking, and do irreparable mischief. When we see poets thus misapplying their talents, and combining with the great adversary of mankind, that they may be admired for their wit, while they are doing all they can to destroy the world, one could wish they were all banished out of a Christian country: but as if this were not enough, sentimental novelists add themselves to the party, and teach us, what is horrible to hear, that self-murder may be an act of piety! farther than which, madness itself can never go.*

From the whole of this subject, you must see what is the dangerous situation of miserable man: deceived by his imagination, how he is agitated by the winds of his own passion, and drawn out of his course by the false lights held out to him by the deceivers and corrupters of mankind! Beware therefore of men, and fly to God, who alone can support and deliver us under the trials of this mortal life. Danger destroys many; but danger *awaits all:* even those that are saved must first be tried. There never

* See Note 4.

never was a saint who found his way to heaven, but after some great tribulation, of which the world perhaps knew little or nothing. Many things pass between God's providence and the heart of a poor sinner, which can neither be described, nor forgotten: the soul is brought into some strait, out of which it seems impossible to escape, that it may feel its own insufficiency, and depend only and wholly upon the sufficiency of God: in other words, that it may be convinced of the truth of the principle, on which it is to be saved; of which principle the world knows nothing, and it is lost for want of it. We have a great pattern of this in the history of the children of Israel, when they were brought out of Egypt: the Church of God was led forth in a direction toward the Red Sea. The waters were before them; the Egyptians were behind them: if they went forward, they were drowned; if they went backward, they were slain: they could do nothing but stand still; they did so; and they saw the salvation of God.* It is not a time to learn these lessons when the evil is upon us; they must have been learned before, or we shall not be able to stand in the evil day.

That God brings good men into difficulties

* See Note 3.

out of which he alone can save them, is a doctrine which none but good men can understand or believe. And let them never be discouraged: such trouble is no sign that God has forsaken them; it is a sign that God hath adopted them for his children, and will save them at last. One of the greatest favourites of heaven, the patriarch Jacob, was exercised with these trials; but under them all God was present to his faith, redeeming him from all evil; and whenever we are in extremity, let his words be a lesson to us.—*I have waited for thy Salvation, O Lord.*

NOTES.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.—*Page* 117.

THE Poet in his Elegy on an unfortunate Lady who killed herself for love (I believe incestuous) thus blends his praises with his lamentations.

First, it is made questionable whether it can be any *crime in heaven* to act the *part of a Roman*, and the lady is celebrated for *thinking greatly* and *dying bravely*: that as she soared above vulgar passion in the practice of incest, her ambition was sanctified by the example of aspiring to angels and gods, that is devils; for he can allude to nothing but the fall of Lucifer, whose fall is called a *glorious* one. The poet, seeming to think himself in possession of St. Peter's keys, makes no doubt but that the pure spirit of this self-murdress (who made Lucifer her pattern) is gone to heaven, its congenial place. Yet such is the consistency of a poet's logic, that he prays heaven that the lasting lustre, the great sentiments, and the heroic death of this woman, may be sent as a curse, and a sudden vengeance on the posterity of those who crossed her desires. So are they *all* to *perish*; that is, they are to indulge the passion of angels and gods, and die an honourable Roman death,

death, receive the protection of angels' wings over their graves, and consecrate the unconsecrated ground in which self-murderers are buried!

Our studies of late have encouraged a sort of religion which has no devotion in it; while it affects superior rationality, it leaves us there, and so we are destitute of that divine comfort without which the soul of a Christian cannot weather the storms of life.

Want of employment renders the mind stagnant, vapid, and by degrees noxious to itself.

If the affections are violently set upon any thing in this world, whether fame, wealth, or pleasure, and are disappointed, then life becomes insupportable. Therefore the moral is this: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

Lunacy, though sometimes accidental or natural, is generally artificial: ungovernable appetites fill the vessels with gross humours, and if they settle in the head, they generate disorders in the mind. I do not suppose there ever was a well-governed mind in an ungoverned body: and mortification being now totally out of fashion in the world and exploded in religion (so far have we unhappily carried on reformation) there is more self-indulgence than there used to be, and consequently the mind becomes distempered, and when vice co-operates, and inflamed passions are disappointed, lunacy succeeds, and ends in suicide. This is often the progress: the world is full of disappointment; he who would bear it well must reduce his passions, and he who would do this must mortify his body. There is no other course. I have heard it observed in a Roman Catholic country, "that the fulness which intemperance breeds in the gentry is brought down by the meagre days of the week; and if that is not sufficient, by the Lent comes round, that it is sure to bring them into

into good order, good principles, resignation to the will of God in all things, and trust in his protection." God permits the troubles of the righteous, whose disappointments are productive of future good to pious men, and they then often live. Faith holds out a light in the darkest night of vexation, and hope raises the dejected spirit. They are not the passions of good people that lead to suicide, but of the proud, the vain, and irreligious; who take their comfort from this world, and it forsakes them.

Temperance is the next preservative: and to open the mind to some faithful friend, especially to a spiritual counsellor. When the mind is filled with some bad subject and overloaded, it must be relieved, as the body is when it is too full of bad blood.

Vanity and ungoverned passions breed extravagance; extravagance soon leads to distress and poverty: to remedy which they fly to gaming for a poor chance of mending their broken affairs, which becoming still worse by this dreadful expedient, desperation ensues, and self-murder is the end.

The doctrine of reprobation terrifies some ill-informed minds, who taking the notion of absolute unconditional predestination in a wrong sense, are driven to despair, and give themselves up as objects devoted to destruction; a most unhappy delusion, to remove which would require a discourse of itself; but here I can only touch upon it.

Note 2, page 118.

Ignorant and ill designing people tell us, that suicide is no where forbidden in the Scripture. If it be not expressly forbidden, it is because it is not supposed, as being a thing to which there is no temptation; for no man hateth

hateth his own flesh; he is in danger of loving it over much; when a man is forbidden to murder for robbery or revenge, to commit adultery, and to covet his neighbours' goods, there is the temptation of gaining or gratifying; and therefore there is something to *be* forbidden: but how strangely would it sound, if it were inserted into the commandments, "*thou shalt not put out thine own eyes!*" It would look as if the commandments were given for the benefit of fools and madmen; to whom no commandments can be of any service: and they that can argue in such a manner are surely no better.

Note 3, *page* 119.

When a man is surrounded with danger, and knoweth not in his distress which way to turn himself; it may sound like foolishness to bid him *sit still*, but it is good doctrine, even the doctrine of God himself, by the prophet Isaiah, (xxx. 7.) *their strength*, says he, *is to sit still*: and it is very true; for when it comes to this, *God is their strength*; and in that case they are sure to be delivered. There are situations, under which nothing can preserve the servants of God, but the faith and patience with which they *wait* upon him.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The Delay of God's Judgments.

ECCLES. viii. 11.

BECAUSE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY, THEREFORE THE HEART OF THE SONS OF MEN IS FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL.

IF it *were* executed speedily—for instance, if every man who committed a theft were immediately to lose the use of his right hand, there would be no such thing as theft in the world: but the honesty produced by such a measure would be of little value, because it would be the effect of force; there would be no principle in it but that of fear; which is the principle of a slave; the same with that which keeps brute beasts in order. The works of men can be good

good or bad only so far as they are the works of the *will*, which is at liberty to chuse between good and evil. True religion assists the will of man, and works with it, but does not destroy it. Therefore sentence is not executed speedily against an evil work; but the punishment of it is generally suspended for a time, and the decrees of God in that respect are left to the contemplation of faith, which sees things as yet invisible. In some cases punishment is deferred for so long a time, that men persuade themselves it will never be executed: that there is no invisible judge of human actions; or, if there is, that he either careth not about them, or puts off all punishment to another world: and that therefore men may act as they please in this world without any fear of the consequences. These are persons of a very untoward disposition of mind, and there is little hope of doing them much good: but if it were possible to open their eyes, they might judge in a different manner. I shall therefore attempt to prove in this discourse, that although God does not punish *speedily*, he punishes *certainly*. Sin and misery do so belong to one another, that they will *meet together*; in many cases uch sooner than people are aware of: this is iat I mean to shew by arguments taken from the

the nature of sin, from the records of holy Scripture, and from the opinions of good men.

The nature of sin is such (of some sins more than others) that it either carries its own punishment with it, or soon brings it. Among a list of unrighteous persons St. Paul places the drunkard, the fornicator, the covetous, and assures us, that *such persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God:* which is certainly true, because the kingdom of God can never bear what is *contrary* to its nature. But follow such persons for a while, and see what becomes of them in this world. Is there any misery in poverty? How much more miserable does it soon become if you add drunkenness to it! In honest poverty there is no shame; but the poor drunkard is *all* shame: he is a nuisance to himself and to the world. If the drunkard be rich, will *that* save him? How many such are carried off *suddenly*; some by distempers; some by *evil accidents*; some by fighting and contention! And they who may seem to be at a stand, as if they were in no danger, are slowly undermining their constitutions, or bringing ruin upon their affairs, and paving the way to a prison.

If you look into a jail, you see men sitting there pensive and in rags: that is their posture now:

now: had you seen them a while ago, they were uttering shouts of riotous exultation among their profligate companions, as if no harm could possibly come to them. Then as to covetousness, which is the opposite vice, all the world agrees that it is a torment to itself, by giving to a covetous man the name of a *miser* or miserable one. To a man in a dropsy thirst is a tormenting part of the diſtemper. What he drinks never quenches it, but makes it worse: such is the appetite of the miser for wealth: what he gets never satisfies, but only increases the distemper of his mind. Evil trees will bear evil fruits. No thorn will produce grapes; no thistle or bramble will bear figs; so can no happiness arise out of sin. As men sow, they will reap; perhaps not to-day, nor to-morrow; but certainly, though not speedily; and you must have seen so many examples of this, that a doubt ought not to remain on your minds. Health may as well consist with poison, as peace and happiness with a sinful life: and if there were nothing to prove it but the natural effect of vice, that alone would be sufficient with wise men. But as all vice is disobedience, and disobedience against God, whose laws are transgressed by it, vice is not to its natural effects, though they are sufficiently

ciently disastrous, but calls down various kinds of punishment from God. These judicial effects of sin bring us to the examples of the Scripture, which are to be found in every part of it. Cain the first murderer was not (as murderers are now) put to death immediately; but is that man under no punishment, who is condemned to constant terror of mind, and cast out as a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; like the Jews at this day, who are under the same sentence for the same crime? Every day of their lives, they rise up in the morning with that sentence upon their heads, and carry the guilt and punishment of it with them when they go to their rest in the night. Hophni and Phinehas, the two profligate sons of Eli, whom he did not correct as he ought to have done, went on for a time in their own ways, but signal vengeance overtook them in the midst of their course: in one day they died both of them by the sword of the enemy, as it had been foretold of them. David fell in an evil hour into the sins of adultery and murder: of his guilt he was for a while insensible, till he was alarmed by a message from Nathan the prophet; and from that time forward he saw no more happiness and peace in this world: his life was disturbed with tumults and rebel-

lions; always do we find him either flying from danger, or weeping with sorrow. Let no man then hereafter tell us of the example of David, as an encouragement to sin; the miserable consequences of sin were never more displayed than in the history of that man. He was a sinner for a comparatively short period, and he was a sorrowing, afflicted, and tortured penitent for the rest of his life. We learn from the case of David, that God can punish and that he can forgive at the same time. How that can be, and why it happens, may be considered in another place.

If we go to the New Testament, we are there taught how sin is punished in this world. When a poor man, who had suffered from an infirmity thirty and eight years, was cured by our Saviour at the Pool of Bethesda, he added some words of advice in consequence, which contain much in a little compass, and throw great light on our subject when examined—*Sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee:* from which it is an obvious inference, that the bad thing under which he had so long suffered, had been sent upon him for his sin; for some sin which his conscience knew, and which he should have corrected by repentance. We learn further, that when God chastises sin

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in his servants, and that chastisement has not its proper effect, something worse is to be feared, and may be expected. If this be the situation of the servants of God, will any man tell me that sin goes unpunished in this life? Is not the rod of correction daily held over us? Happily for us, it is; for its use is to awaken us, and open our eyes, that we *sleep not in death*; that sin may not increase and stupify us, till it becomes mortal.

We learn from St. Paul, that there were great abuses in the church of Corinth respecting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper: their meetings were not godly, but even riotous and disorderly: one was hungry and another was drunken; so that they were a disgrace to the Church, and to the occasion for which they came thither. What was the consequence of this? For this cause, says the apostle, *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*; that is, many suffer for the offence, by being visited with sickness, or even death itself, who ought to have examined themselves, and to have attended that holy institution with repentance and faith, as all Christians are taught even by their catechism; let them but listen to that; they will then have nothing to fear, and every thing to hope: for

God never yet cast out the poorest sinner, who came to him with a penitent heart, trusting in the merits of Christ's death. If any one would escape, he must judge himself, and then he will not be judged of the Lord: But the reason why I mention this, is, to shew, that God sends punishment upon sin in this life; and therefore that no man has any reason to think he is secure against it. No wise man ever thought that sinners are left to their own ways: they seem so indeed, because sentence is not executed *speedily:* but all that understand the case know that it is executed *certainly*. Hear what the son of Sirach pronounces against perjured persons and profane swearers.—"A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house: if he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence: and if he swear in vain he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities." In like manner it is threatened to the adultress, that her children shall not take root, and her *branches shall bring forth no fruit.* Does not David pronounce, that *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days?* The wicked seem to prosper while the sentence

tence is suspended; but execution comes, when neither they expect it for themselves, nor the world for them. *These are the ungodly*, says the Psalmist, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession. The case is enough to stagger the godly; but let them wait awhile, and the scene is changed: let them go into the sanctuary of God for instruction, and then they will understand what comes to such men; how their prosperous situation is but a slippery place, from which they fall and are destroyed. O how suddenly do they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end! Psalm lxxiii. 18. To the same purpose he saith in another place; *wicked doers shall be rooted out—yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be clean gone; thou shalt look after his place and he shall be away*; and again, *I myself have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and, lo, he was gone; I sought him, but his place could no where be found.* Psal. xxxvii. 36.

It appears from what I have said, that no sinner can promise himself any security even in this present world: and if his heart is set in *him to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed*, he will soon find himself miserably deceived. This point being

settled, I cannot help observing to you, how idly people are often heard to talk about sin and its punishment. They ſuppose that God does *not* punish sin in this world, and therefore that it is *uncharitable* for us to judge that he does so in any particular instance: but on the contrary, God *does often* punish sin *openly* and *visibly*; and therefore it must be our duty to see that he does. For if God punishes some for a warning to others, what benefit can arise to those who do *not see* it? And in many cases, the judgment of God is so plain, that men must either see it, or shut their eyes against it. If they are not taught by it, they will have to answer for their indocility; and God, who never brings evil upon some, but out of mercy to others, will be justified in all his ways. It must be said, that the judgment which falls upon sinners in this world, is suspended for so long a time (God waiting for their amendment in many cases) that men persuade themselves it will never be executed at all: that there is either *no invisible* judge of human actions; or that if there *is*, he careth not about them for the present, but putteth off all judgment to another world: and perhaps when they have got *thus far*, their next step is to *deny* the punishments of the other world; and not

not only to deny them, but even to mock at them.

I know how wicked people corrupt one another with foolish and wicked reflexions: the fire of hell, it is true, was ordained for the punishment of devils: but if there be *Christians*, so called, who take part with the devil in his sin, they must expect to have their part in his punishment; they will be consigned to the company they have chosen. *They who think with angels, and praise God with angels, will live with angels.* They who *think* with *devils* must have their *place* with *devils:* they hate the ways of God, and mock at them; devils hate them, but they do not mock at them; they know too much for that; and in this they tempt ignorant men to be more wicked and desperate than they dare to be themselves; which is a fearful consideration. Devils who dare not mock at God, will mock at *them* for their folly, and accuse men before God as *more wicked* than *evil spirits:* and what can such men say for themselves? they will be *speechless then*, however rapidly and *boldly* they may talk *now.* To such false confidence as this is that warning given, in the same book from whence my text is taken—*Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer*

thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes—that is, go on in the ways of thine own passions *and* opinions *—but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.* Eccl. xi. 9.

That God *will* judge men hereafter, we have no doubt: that he *often* judges them here, cannot be denied: and though all the laws of infinite justice, by which rewards and punishments are administered in this *world* and the *next*, are such as we can neither *find out* nor *understand*, still the reason is sufficiently clear, why *good men* are *often punished* in this world, and *bad men are not.*

It was observed above, that God can *punish* and *forgive* at the *same time*; because punishment from him, when it falls upon good men, *is not* the *punishment* of *wrath* and *vengeance*, but that of *love* and *correction*; it is therefore a sign that he *forgives*, and it ought to *be so* understood. It may seem a strange doctrine, that God should *punish while* he *forgives*; but it is certainly true. When Nathan said to David, *the sword shall never depart from thy house*; he said at the same time, *the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.* God therefore *forgives while* he *punishes*, and *punishes*

nishes because he forgives. It may possibly be a *privilege* of the godly to *suffer* under him; and every wise Christian will pray, as many have been known to do, that they may have *all their* punishment in *this* world. If they are the sons of God, they must be corrected when they offend: for what *wise father* is there who doth *not* correct his own children? It is a sign that they belong to God; who speaking to his people Israel, saith, *You only have I known of all the families of the Earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* What a comfort is it under every affliction for a Christian to know, that his sufferings mark him for a child of God, under the *care* of the Almighty! He has little to fear, in life or in death.

On the other hand, when we see the wicked not only unpunished, but even prosperous, it is no sign that they are in a safe way, but the contrary; they are neglected and left to their own ways, because they are bastards and not sons; they escape in this world, because they are reserved for the punishment of another, and miserable will they be when the day of their visitation shall come! We see one in the gospel, possessed for a time of his good things, and *faring sumptuously every day:* but how soon

does

After this we have a particular account of the effect wrought upon the Pharisees; where we see how truth operates upon those that will not receive it.

Then there is the condition and disposition of those that do receive it; which we see in the account of the man himself.

And last of all, the Judgment of Jesus Christ upon both parties—"*For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind.*"

These things let us examine in their order: and first, the *case*; which, it seems, had occasioned some speculation among the disciples. They had reasoned thus; "As the misery of man is punishment, and as all punishment is for some offence, where could the offence be, of which a man brought the punishment into the world with him? so they asked their Master, *who did sin, the man or his parents? They* enquire curiously about the cause or *beginning* of the fact; but our Saviour answers in few words with respect to the *end* of it: they speak of the *evil* that was in it; he, of the *good* that would come out of it; that the thing was not designed as a punishment for the sin of any person, but as a case that would afford an opportunity for the works of God to be

be made manifest: the man was born blind, that Jesus Christ might give him sight. What wisdom is here, in giving such a turn to the subject! How many vain, tedious, and fruitless questions about causes and beginnings might be avoided, if we did but consider ends and effects, and the good which there is in every thing which is easy to be seen, and is worth all the rest. How does the rain fall, says the Philosopher? is it by its own weight, or by the state of the Heavens? Is the cause in the water itself, or is it in the air, or in something else? What an opening is here for disquisition? Whereas the answer of Truth and Wisdom is exactly like what we have heard already; "It falls, that the fruits of the earth may grow; that man may be fed, and may be thankful to the Giver of all good." That is enough for us; this is the best part of the subject; and here we are in no danger of being mistaken. The best way then to answer the great question about the *origin of Evil*, is to consider what is the *end* of it; what *good* comes out of it; this makes the subject at once plain and useful. Why was the man born blind? That the works of God might appear, and Christ might cure him. Why did man fall? That God might save him. Why is evil permitted

mitted in the world? That God may be glorified in removing it? Why does the body of man die? That God may raise it up again. When we philosophize in this manner we find light, and certainty, and comfort: we have a memorable example of it in the case before us; and, I humbly think, this is the use we ought to make of it.

Next in order is the *cure* of the blind man; concerning which, we are first taught the manner of it, and then the moral of it: the manner of it is very instructive; but the moral is more so. The power of God being invisible in its operation, is always attended with some outward form, as a visible sign of it. In the present case, Jesus anoints the eyes of the patient with clay, and bids him go and wash it off with water, in the Pool of Siloam: in consequence of which, when the water should wash away the clay, the Divine Power would take away the blindness. Now, if this man had been a modern Philosopher, he would have put a question or two: he would have said, "Clay! What can that do? it will make my eyes worse instead of better. And as to the *water* that is to wash it away, when did that ce a blind man see? And why the waters loam? What are they *more* than others?

Thus

Thus does human wisdom stand questioning and expecting to have a reason for every thing; and this, in cases where, perhaps, a reason cannot be given; the *will* of God being the only reason, and the best of all; but it is such as human reason never yet submitted to: nothing but *faith* can submit to the *will of God:* and as nothing but the will and pleasure of God can save lost mankind, nothing but faith, which submits to that will, can be saved. Man asks, how can an effect follow from that which is no cause of it? But faith answers, it will be a cause, if God shall please to make it so: therefore I will take it as a cause, and trust to him for the effect. Thus doth faith reason, and it finds its own account in so doing; but thus the Philosopher never did reason, nor will he ever. And Naaman was one of them when he argued, that if water was to be the cure of his leprosy, why not any water; why not the better waters of Damascus, rather than the worse in Israel? But here he was mistaken—water was not to be used as a natural cause, but a spiritual cause; a cause according to the will of God; a pledge, without the use of which, the invisible divine cause of the cure would never have acted. The Syrian was angry, when he

was

was directed to the use of such a cause; and Christianity, for the admitting and prescribing of such causes, is never forgiven by the wise reasoners of the world, but called superstition. But the poor man now before us, being blessed with common sense, and having none of that fine superior sense, which turns a man into a fool by making him act absurdly, did as he was bid; he went to the proper place, though he could give no reason for it but the command of Christ, and he returned with his eyesight. So much for the manner of this cure; the moral of it is still of more value.

When our Saviour was about to perform the miracle, he preached upon the case, and gave the sense of it. "*As long*," said he, "*as* "*I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" He did not come into the world to cure the bodies, but the souls of men; and he never cured their bodies, but as a sign that he came to cure their souls. If his office had been to cure their bodies, he might have said, I am come to give sight to *this man* that was born blind: but no; he gives light to a *world*; and to this *poor* man only as a sign of it. He is a figurative and spiritual sun, and if he restores e blind the light of the day, it is nothing than a proof that he restores to the under-

standing

standing the light of truth. He shines, as the sun does, who is his image, not to an individual, not to a nation, not to an age, not to a world; but to all places, and to all times. He who comes to destroy the works of the Devil, must work upon the same great scale. The Devil is called the God of *this world*, who hath *blinded the minds* of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them. Therefore, he who came to destroy the works of the Devil must act as a light of the world; and restore the sight of their minds, that the light of the glorious gospel *may* shine unto them: and this was the sense and spirit of the miracle, as Christ himself hath applied it. In the common way of reasoning, nothing more is considered, than that a miracle is an act of divine power; to shew that he by whom it is done must be a teacher come from God, and that God is with him: but there is much more than this to be learned; for while the *power* of the miracle shews that he was sent of God, the *sense* of the miracle teaches for what purpose he was sent; and so where reason sees a proof, faith hears a sermon.

Christ is therefore the light of life, the light

of the mind, without whom every man is in darkness, without whom every man is *born* in darkness: and before the Gospel can shine in upon the mind, the eyes of the understanding must be restored to sight, that the organ of *faith* may receive the things of God; without which an unbeliever, let him be as wise and as learned as he will in all other things, is perfectly in the state of a man that is blind; he was *born* blind, and he continues so.

We come now to a most interesting part of the narrative; the effect which this miracle had upon the Pharisees, who could not receive it. When the sun shines full upon a man's eyes, and he cannot turn away from it, he discovers symptoms of uneasiness, which make him appear to great disadvantage. And the case is the same with his mind: which, when the truth which it cannot receive is thrown strongly upon it, is in the same condition with the face; it is agitated and convulsed, and so much out of shape, that the mind of a wise man cannot be distinguished from that of an idiot: of which reflexion the truth will be fully confirmed by the case before us.

For in the Pharisees, who were assembled on this occasion, we have a set of men, learned in the law, and subtile and captious disputants,

disputants, who from some appearances, which did not well agree with their principles, had already agreed among themselves, that if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue; that is, that he should be excommunicated. But here comes a man, who shews them by an undeniable fact, that he was, and must be the Christ. The question therefore was, what could be done under this dilemma? How they could maintain their own precipitate sentence, or how they could yield to the demonstration? Here they were in a great strait; for they could do neither the one nor the other: a cowardly retractation would have ruined their cause, and made their characters ridiculous: the expedient, therefore, which offered itself, was, to try whether they could deny the fact. Some of the people had been questioning with the man before; but when it is said that he was *brought to the Pharisees*, it is to be apprehended that he was brought in form to the council or seat of Moses, in order to be examined. And first, they do not ask him directly about the fact, but about the *manner* of it, *how* he had received his sight; hoping to find therein some subterfuge; either that it might have been an accident, or might

be owing to some natural cause: but that could not be; for clay and water, without the power of God added, will never cure a man that is blind. Here some of them thought it a good objection against the miracle, that it had been done on the Sabbath Day, and that therefore he who did it must be a bad man: but it occurred in answer to that, that if he had been a bad man, he could not have done it at all.—*How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* Here then they were at a stand: so their next device is, to get rid of the fact by cross-examining the witness. They send now for his parents, knowing that they would be loth to speak out, for fear of the consequences: but their evidence was positive, as to the identity of the person, and as to his former blindness; as to the fact of his cure they left it to their son to bear witness of that, and the manner of it: and he adhered to his own story with such firmness and simplicity of truth, that nothing could be made of him. So now we find them at another stage of their absurdity; they admit the fact, but deny the consequence; and attack the character of Christ, as if they knew him to be a sinful person; a man that could never be taken for the Messiah, because they could not know whence he was. Here common

common sense could no longer contain itself; the man is astonished to think, how it could possibly happen, that there should be a Prophet in the place, opening the eyes of the blind, and that the great doctors of the time should know nothing of him! He therefore preserves no respect for them any longer, but follows up his arguments so closely, that there was nothing left but to have recourse to absolute authority, and do that by violence which they could not compass by all the arts of evasion. So they gave him to know, that all he had said signified nothing, because he was an inferior person, not fit to teach them, and had come into the world as a poor blind sinner: thus they answered him at last, and "cast him out" of the congregation; which act shews that he was before a Court of Judicature. And here, we may suppose, that the persons who would have put Lazarus to death, that his resurrection might not bear witness against themselves, would freely have put out the eyes of this man again, that *his* sight might not condemn their blindness. If we would see human perverseness in its utmost excess, and to what lengths of absurdity the hatred of truth will drive men; there is no greater example upon earth than this we have now before us. But we have

done for the present with those who *rejected* the truth; and are now to consider the case of the man who *received* it.

He that finds Jesus Christ, and follows him, must bear his reproach: but his gains will be far greater than his losses. This man being likely to prove a troublesome witness against the Pharisees, they rid themselves of him as well as they can; and being themselves in possession of the law, there is neither law nor judge to call them to an account: but, nevertheless, judgment hangs over their heads. As to the man himself, their conduct, though apparently against him, was very much in his favour—for he could never more have any opinion of their judgment; and so great a difficulty in the way of every common Jew as the authority of the rulers, was removed. He could never think of their persons afterwards, without hating and despising their opinions: and in consequence would never after be deceived by them. He was in every respect a fit object for our Saviour's mercy—he was born in blindness: a sort of beginning that would not dispose his mind to reject the light*: he was in so much poverty, that the history

* Heu dementiam ab his initiis existimantium, ad superbiam se genitos. PLIN.

story tells us he *sat and begged:* the world had affronted him, and had condemned him against all sense and reason, when they could not answer him; so he was in little danger from fashion and opinion, those pests of learning and religion. He had a personal experience of the power of Jesus as a prophet sent from God: and being thus prepared in mind, body, and estate, he would have no objection against his unpopular character, or against the novelty of his doctrine. When Jesus heard that they had cast him out, he *found him*; whence we may presume he went after him; as it was natural for him to do, the man being now one of those whom he came into the world to seek and to save, a lost sheep; a sheep turned out of the fold, and in want of a Shepherd to take him up and receive him. To this man our Saviour put the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man was already convinced, that he was a *prophet*, and had affirmed it to the Pharisees; the question then must mean more than that; and what can it mean, but the belief of his divinity? which it certainly did, because in consequence of this belief, we are told, that *he worshipped him.* It has been already observed, how this man was prepared for a believer; but his readiness is wonderful:

as soon as he heard the name of the Son of God, he asked, *who* is he, that I might believe on him? Blessed and happy, however contemptible in the world's esteem, is this poor man, so ready to *believe!* How much do we now hear of those, who are *not* ready to believe! who looking upon every act of faith as an act of weakness and enthusiasm, are ready for any thing rather than that; and are never easy till the world knows it. The gospel of Christ has not many recommendations for the great and the wise: the blind can see it, the lame can go after it, the poor can purchase it: and all the greatness of man must put itself into their state, and stoop to poverty of spirit, before it is possible to believe. In the two characters of the Pharisees, and the person they thus cast out, we have a pattern of the believer and the infidel, which will hold true to the end of the world; where the temper of the Pharisee is, there will Christ be unknown or rejected; where the other temper is, of the man that was born blind, there will Christ be accepted and valued, and no where else. It is the wise and righteous judgment of God, never to be thought upon but with the most profound reverence and submission, that the low should be exalted, and that the lofty should be made low; that the hungry

hungry should be filled; and the rich sent empty away; the ignorant enlightened, and the wise confounded. For this purpose did our Lord, as he informs us, come into the world, that this judgment might take place; and this is the last part of the subject we are to consider: for the history is concluded with this application of the whole.—*For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.* The language of the gospel has many seeming contradictions (called paradoxes), which when examined are strictly true and proper; this is one of them. How can he be said to see that seeth not, or he to be made blind that has the use of his eye-sight? The meaning is, that the gospel should make the poor and ignorant, who are reckoned to see nothing, wise and knowing in the things of God, but that it should make those, who are wise in their own conceit, and think they see every thing, know less than they did before. In the reason and propriety of all this, God will be justified, when the case shall be explained to us: but the fact has been notorious in every age. We have the first instance of it in Paradise: "Ye shall see," said Satan, and he was believed: in consequence of which, man fell from light into darkness,

darkness; knowing and confessing, that like the poor man in the gospel, we are *born blind*; that the light of all true knowledge is wanting, till the God that made the Sun sends it down upon us from Heaven; and that even when light is come, the organ of sight is distempered and must be cured. This world too is so much before the eyes of men, that it will not permit them to view better things: let us arise then at the command of Jesus, and wash away that clay.

From what we have seen in the Pharisees, let us beware the judgment of men, who would bear us down with their own false opinions, the fashionable errors of the time; and never have recourse to such judges to know what the gospel is, and how far Jesus is to be received by us. When we see into what excesses of absurdity and envy they were carried through a conceit of false learning, let us put up the following petition, which in few words comprehends the whole moral of the subject.—Give us, O Lord, the sight of that man who had been blind from birth, and deliver us from the blindness of his judges, who had been learning all their lives and knew nothing: and if the world should cast us out,

be found of Thee whom the world crucified;

crucified; and having followed the Light of thy Truth in this world, we may, through thine own merits and mediation, have with Thee the Light of Life in the everlasting glory of the world to come. Amen.

SERMON

must, as such, partake of his nature. But it is chiefly so, when we consider that the end of it is to communicate holiness to man, and lead him to holiness and purity of life. It calls men to be separated from this world, which lieth in wickedness, and to become members of the kingdom of God. From thenceforth it sets new objects before them, new good and new evil, and inspires them with new affections, with love for the one, and hatred for the other. Its objects being all of an high and spiritual kind, the precepts which are intended to lead us to them are all pure and holy, and the sum total of them all is expressed in that one precept of the law, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*" Man is to be made fit for the presence of God; but that cannot be, unless he becomes such as God is. Therefore the gospel saith, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:" no other persons will be fit for it; it is therefore the design of the gospel to make them such. And this it doth, not by restraining men from sin, as the laws of the land and the terror of punishment do; but by inspiring them with an admiration of purity, and a love towards it; for the sake of God who is purity itself. The gospel, as an introduction to the kingdom of heaven, must be a lesson of holiness:

holiness: it cannot be otherwise: and poor blind miſtaken men, who would make it consistent with unholiness, know nothing about it, and can have no share in it. How *precious* then is the gospel, if it can lead man to the glorious presence of God! It is therefore represented to us by something more precious than gold itself, even by *pearls*: "cast not your *pearls*," saith the text. And in another text, the *kingdom of heaven*, which is still no other than the gospel, is like unto a merchant, seeking *goodly pearls*: who, when he had found *one pearl* of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. So apposite is this comparison, that even the history of the pearl will afford us moral instruction. Pearls do not lie in the way of every common observer; they lie deep in the ocean; he that would obtain them must seek for them; and he that would purchase the best of them all must give a great price. So also must he who would purchase the gospel; he must seek it—he must give—the whole world for it; nothing less will buy it; and he who would have it for less, shews that he is not worthy of it. The world, as men commonly understand and use it, is one great lie: he that would have the truth, must give it up. "We have left all," said the disciples;

and they did right: they were merchants that knew how to reckon, and how to estimate: they were therefore assured what they should have in return: this pearl would make them amends for all they had given up.

But this pure, this holy, this inestimable treasure, is not to be thrown away upon those who are incapable of possessing it. It is not to be given to dogs or swine. A dog is incapable of that which is holy: if he were fed with a limb from a sacrifice, it would in that capacity be nothing to him: he would feed upon it, as upon any common thing.* Give a pearl to a swine, and it becomes a thing of no value. It is the same with men. To many of them the gospel signifies no more, than if you were to give a sacrifice to a dog: and its value is no more seen or understood, than when pearls are cast before the filthiest beasts in nature; who tread them under foot as they would the mire of the streets. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews bids us think of what sore punishment they must be worthy, who have *trodden under foot the Son of God*, and

* The ancient Greeks had holy or sacred places; they had even sacred islands; but into such places it was not lawful to transport a *dog*. *See Xenoph. Cyneg. cap.* v. § 23.

and *counted the blood of the covenant wherewith* they were *sanctified*, an *unholy* thing; regarding these sacred and precious things as dogs and swine would regard and treat the greatest treasures of the world. But of that sore punishment such persons do not think, because they are insensible of their own unworthiness. From the animals by which they are denoted, we may learn what temper they are of, and what is the true reason of their contempt and insensibility. The chief qualities by which dogs and swine are distinguished, are *greediness*, *impudence*, and *uncleanness*. These qualities are odious in the worst of beasts; but how much more so, when they are found in *men*: worst of all, when they are found in *Christians*; I mean, in those who are so called. And first, for their *greediness*.

To a bad man this world is the great object. He thinks he never can have enough of it; and he is resolved to get it by any manner of means. As one dog will snatch the meat from the mouth of another, so will he take to himself the property, the prospects, the character, of another man. The dog is all for the present time; so is he. The dog sees nothing beyond it; no more doth he: if the appetite is supplied, it is all he looks for. When the dog is

hunting, he thinks of nothing but his prey; and the man of the world, in all his pursuits, thinks only of what he shall catch. The prophet complains of bad watchmen under the name of *greedy dogs, which can never have enough; looking every one for his own gain from his quarter.*—Isa. lvi. 11. Such men think only how they may get, and have and enjoy; as the dog when he is hunting thinks only how he shall overtake and devour. How incessant are the labours of some men in this chace hunting the world; hunting one another; and snatching whatever they can from those who are upon the same hunt with themselves! These are the men who are so fond of the doctrine of equality; they admire it of all things: but this shews their true character; for a pack of *dogs* are all *equal*; all have the same rights; all are born to hunt and devour. No dog gives any thing to another dog: his rule is, to have it all to himself: and so little justice or mercy is there among these animals, when the devouring principle takes place, that it is not an uncommon accident for one poor beast to be marked out for a victim; in which case the rest fall upon him, and tear him to pieces.

That fatal distemper of madness, communicable

nicable to men and all four-footed beasts, and so dreadful in its effects, begins wholly (to the best of our knowledge) in the species of dogs; and is therefore distinguished by the name of canine madness. Distempers of the same quality are bred in the minds of greedy men: distempers as unaccountable, as infectious, and as deadly as that which is bred in dogs. When they lose their religion, and all sense of another world, they are often given up to this malady; and when one man hath it, he is as eager as a raving dog to communicate the same to others. The doctrine of equality; what is it, but the bite of a mad dog? The "rights of man" is another bite: The doctrine of election, as the fanatics understand it, is another; and as the dog under his distemper leaves his home, and runs wild into the fields, and woods; so do men with this notion in their heads, leave the church and go off into schism. In all these cases, we see how fast the infection spreads; and how often it is incurable: reason and argument cannot reach it. What can the event be, but that men shall worry and devour one another to the end of the world, unless God of his infinite mercy shall find some remedy? And what does all this arise from but a dog-like greediness after this world? This it is which makes men the ene-

mies of God, the enemies of truth, and the enemies of one another.

A second quality of the dog is *impudence*: the moſt antient of heathen poets compares a man to a dog on account of his impudence—he calls one a *shameless* dog. With the greediness of the dog, there commonly goes the impudence of the dog. There is scarcely any property which distinguishes a bad man from a good one more than his impudence: therefore impudent men are great favourites with the author of evil. *Blessed are the meek*, says the Saviour: blessed are the impudent, says the destroyer: and if there be any sort of *grace*, which it is in the power of Satan to bestow, it is certainly this of *impudence*: ye may call it the *devil's blessing*. If he employs any person about his own works and designs, he seems commonly to provide in the first place, that he be impudent. A love of truth, an honest heart, and a good intention, will make a man bold: piety and trust in God will make him patient: but a bad heart and a mischievous intention will make him impudent; and unless he is so, he will have but little chance of succeeding in his undertakings. If an honest man is met by any one in the road to evil, he is easily abashed, and his modesty saves him: but an

evil

evil man, if confronted and disappointed, begins again: his conscience feels no more than his flesh would do, if it had been seared with a hot iron: if confuted and exposed, he feels no shame: nothing hurts him, unless it be the loss of some worldly object, or a miscarriage in some base design: and even then he is not discouraged, but still perseveres; repeats his old lies, renews his old attempts, and as he begins, so he goes on, stedfast and unmoveable. These are the men in whom Satan delights, and whom he employs upon the best of his enterprizes. Look at some of the principal of those persons, who at this time are leaders in public mischief: see if there is a modest man amongst them: it cannot be: such a man would be of no worth in *that* party. And indeed you will generally find, that the man whose face can *oppose* every thing, goes naturally into *opposition*: that is the stage on which his talents are displayed: the face of an hog can make its way through an hedge of thorns.

But there is another quality remaining; which is that of *uncleanness*. For this the two animals of our text are brought together by St. Peter. Christians are called away that they may *escape the pollutions of the world*: but many return to them again, and

become as they were before. This is illustrated in the following words. — *It happened unto them according to the true proverb; the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* These practices are loathsome: but they are no more than a sign of the more loathsome ways of those people, who forsake the grace of God for the pollutions of the world. Nothing is really unclean in the sight of God, but sin, which defileth the soul and spirit. Devils are called *unclean* spirits from their wickedness; though in them there can be no such thing as bodily impurity. A soul defiled with sin is as contrary to the nature of God, as a beast wallowing in the mire is hateful and adverse to man; and a soul returning to the sin it had forsaken, falls into as loathsome an habit as that of the dog; who never can be raised above his nature, and cured of his odious manners: education will never mend him; he will be a dog still as he was before.

When we meet with men of these ill qualities, of such men we, as Christians, are to beware; for we shall do them no good, and if they can they will do us harm: therefore, says the apostle, *beware of dogs;* for there were persons, particularly the unbelieving Jews at that

that time, who beset the preachers of the gospel, as dogs fall upon a stranger. Ill men arm themselves against those who reprove them; and if a man is given up to *this* world, nothing provokes him more than when he is told of *another* world. It was declared, in the language of prophecy, that Christ should be persecuted by evil men, in that passage of the twenty-second Psalm—"many *dogs* are come about me, the council of the wicked layeth siege against me." It is the same with the followers of Christ at this day: they who do not receive the truth, will always hate, and despise, and contradict, and persecute, and snarl at, and bite those who deliver it. If any one hears the gospel, he can very seldom hear it with indifference; it either pleases him or provokes him: and provoked he must be, if he belongs to the class of people we have been describing. For the gospel tells a man he must *deny* himself; how will he bear that, if he is *greedy?* it tells him he must renounce the world: how will he bear that, if it is the great idol of his affections? and if it be the pride and business of his life to follow the forms and fashions of the world; he will be out of patience when he hears, that a Christian must not conform to it; that he must not do as the world does.

Every

You see therefore what you must be, in order to receive and value the gospel; you must put away those sins and corruptions which hinder the reception of it. Into the place of greediness and insatiableness, you must admit self denial: for impudence you must admit of an humble, contrite spirit; intemperance and uncleanness must be exchanged for holiness and purity: then will you love the truth, and delight to hear it preached. Then shall we ever be ready to give you that which is holy, and cast pearls at your feet; knowing that they will be taken up with reverence, and valued according to their worth. The text says, cast ye not *your* pearls. What a blessing is that! the gospel hath put us in *possession* of them: these pearls are *our* property: God hath given them; and all the world cannot take them away: neither moth nor thieves can touch them: nothing can forfeit them but our own unworthiness, and the indulgence of base and grovelling affections. Which may God Almighty prevent, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

JOHN xiv. 6.

JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

HE who would be happy in this world, and in the world to come, must know Jesus Christ, and love him, and keep his commandments.—By knowing him, I do not mean that we should have personal knowledge of him, as Peter had, when he said, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* It is sufficient for us to know *what* he is: ceive him with the heart and affections; ı it be not possible that we should see him eyes of the body. To the eye of *faith*

faith he is visible enough, for all the purposes of salvation; and so the words of St. Peter imply, where he says—*whom having not seen ye love: in whom, though ye now see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. Such joy must every man feel, when his eyes are opened, and Jesus Christ is revealed to him; and no words can reveal him to us more effectually than the words of this text.—Blessed are the eyes which can see him as he is *here* described! That *you* may be able to do this, I shall make them as plain and easy as I can: and if there be any among you, who have not seen him yet, may God bring such out of darkness into light; that their eyes may not be closed in death, till they have seen the salvation of God!

I proceed to shew you, how truly these three terms, *the way, the truth, and the life*, describe to us the character of Jesus Christ: and first I shall shew, how he is *the way*.

We are all departed from God: our disobedience drove us from Paradise, to wander about this world; and nothing but disappointment and misery can attend us, till we find God whom we had lost, and return to him again. We are *all gone out of the way:* and instead of seeking after God, we are always seeking after something

thing else. We have some vision of happiness before us, to which God is not necessary; in which he has no share—*God is not in all their thoughts*, saith the prophet. Here are two very bad circumstances: first, that we are lost, and next, that we have neither power nor inclination to return. The poor sheep, straying in the wilderness, when wolves are abroad, cannot be in a worse case. It was the wolf which first made us wander. Such doctrine as a wolf would give to a sheep, such did the tempter give to man; and in consequence of it, he has been wandering ever since—he is in a *wilderness where there is no way*; no footsteps are to be seen: we may go over the whole world, and find no way that will lead us to God: every way of man carries us farther from him. The way in which he commonly walketh is called *a shadow*; it is only an image and outward semblance of life, which, like a shadow, soon departeth. Try all his ways by this rule, and you will find them all alike. When he is in the way to be rich, he is laying up for some other to *gather* when he is *gone*. If he is in the way to be happy, his pleasures turn into thorns and vexations. If he is in the way to be great, a short time will put him upon a level with the rest of mankind. If he is in the way to be wise,

wise, his wisdom is a wisdom of words. If he is a discoverer, he brings in a fresh generation of terms; persuading the world that he has new knowledge, because he has new expreſſions. Thus is man constantly seeking the way, but he is still estranged from it, and misses his true object. It was therefore intimated of old that a way is prepared, which man can neither make nor find. Jacob's visionary ladder had this use: it foreshewed, that there should be a communication between earth and heaven: a method of descending from heaven, and of ascending from the earth. This our Saviour applies to his own person. HE is that ladder by which man is to ascend to God: and to attempt it without him, is to think we can step into the clouds. Man can no more make his own communication with God, than he can make a ladder to heaven. Christ must be our *mediator*, before he becomes our teacher; and of this we can give you another proof. When man was shut out of paradise, a *flaming sword* was interposed to keep the way of the tree of life. When man left that seat of bliss, labour and death were before him, and vengeance was behind him. There was no return for him into paradise, without passing the fire of that sword. This is the thing which Christ did for us: he

suffered

suffered that fire, and survived it; and thus he recovered for us the way to paradise: he overcame this *sharpness of death*, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers: and from the story of the malefactor upon the cross, we may know, what was true of him, may be true of us all; we may all be *with him this day in paradise.*

There is no way to the favour of God, or to the knowledge of God; no entrance administred, but by Jesus Christ; who being the only mediator, is also the only teacher, who shews us the way in which we are to walk. This was one great end of his coming: and all the world hath known and confessed, till of very late years, that *the way of man is not in himself:* it must be revealed to him. And as a way is wanting to all mankind, it is necessary all should understand it. The prophet therefore speaks of it as an *highway*; such as all may see and understand, if they will walk in it. What can be easier to every capacity, than the rule of example? We have nothing to do but to look at Christ; and all is plain. *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.*—Math. xi. 29. How short, and how proper! How suited to our case!—while the world gives a very different

ferent lesson.—" Learn of me, for I am proud and high spirited, and ye shall find nothing but disquiet and labour of heart." The blessed Apostle repeats a lesson corresponding with that of his Master—Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ. How heavy is the burthen of the world, when compared with the yoke of Christ! how laborious and difficult is the way of fashion, when compared with the way to heaven! This short, plain rule, of following Christ, would deliver us all.

And as for that *other* way; that *valley* of the shadow of death, in which we must all walk, there Christ hath gone before us, and shewed us the *path of life:* so that we may all say with the Psalmist, *yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me.* We shall find the way, as sheep are directed across a ford by the shepherd: and though that ford be as wide and as deep as the Red Sea, it will make no difference: the bondage of Egypt will then be left behind, and Canaan will be in full view before us; to which the rod and staff of this great Shepherd will conduct us in safety.

But now let us consider the second capacity in which Christ appears to us; that of the *truth.*

be shed; and so it is nothing. We are told of a redemption from Egypt; but that was a temporary redemption: nothing will save us but an *eternal redemption*, of which that was a figure; but the truth is in Christ: he is the true Lamb, the true Moses, the true Aaron, the true Joshua: he is the truth of all that were before him; the true leader and captain of the people of God; the true priest, the true sacrifice: and this was probably the glorious subject of his Exodus, about which Moses and Elias talked with him at his transfiguration. For neither Moses nor the prophets have any *other* truth: Christ is the sum and substance of all.

But I ventured to say, that the natural or created world itself has no truth without him: and I am persuaded you will find the assertion true. For look at some of the world's first objects, and examine them. We see and admire the light of the day; and we may say with the wise man, "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But this is the light of the eye: it is not the light of the mind: Christ is *that light;* and therefore he calls himself the true light, whom the sun in the heavens points out to us as the *sun of righteousness.* The natural light of the day cannot enlighten a man that is born blind: but

When we lost our *way*, we lost the *truth* at the same time. When Satan shewed a way of knowledge, truth was no longer to be found.— The different opinions among men; that *vain jangling*, as the apostle calls it, is a proof that there is no truth among them. Let any man hear what philosophers have said *about God*, and he will soon see what *human* truth is. But the truth of *God* is this: that the Father sends his Son into the world, that all that believe in Him may be saved. This no philosopher ever thought of. But this is the truth, on which man has depended ever since it was said in paradise, "*the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*" The great end of revelation was to keep up and explain this truth, which was fulfilled in the person of Christ. Without him neither the law nor the prophets, nor even the world itself, has any truth in them. What are all the types in the law of Moses? What is that greatest of all, the passover? It is nothing, unless you see in it, Christ *our passover* is sacrificed for us. The law had a shadow of good things to come, but the body and substance, from whence the shadow was formed, is of Christ. [redacted] blood of Christ, and [redacted] and of [redacted] cannot do

our Saviour is to be understood. He that is the Way, and the Truth, is also the *Life;* and what a blessed hearing is this in such a world as ours, where death spoils every prospect, dissolves all society, and renders every possession vain and empty! What is your life? It is a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth; like a cloud that passes over our heads before the wind, and is gone. Even a wise Heathen can tell us, that it is *rather death than life;* and that the only real life is to be found, not in this world, but out of it. Ask the man of pleasure how he finds it? He must answer, according to matter of fact, (if he has any sense in him) that it is a life, which through the fear of death brings him into continual bondage. The thought of death may be profitable, as it leads us toward another world; but it turns *this* into a Golgotha, a *place of a scull;* a place to which men are brought only to be executed. When the Saviour appears in it, it is no longer that lamentable place it was before; its very nature is changed: for when he beheld the funeral procession of a young man that was carried out to be buried, and the widow his mother following, he said unto her, *weep not:* and what he said to her, he saith to us all: it is a voice to the whole Christian world. He who

spake

spake these words to that poor widow, was himself the *resurrection and the life*, and was about to raise her son. She did not know that, and therefore she *wept*. But now we *all* know it; and therefore we ought *not* to weep.

Since the resurrection of Christ, death is no death, because he has no sting; for sin is the sting of death: and when sin is taken away, as by the atonement of Christ, death should no longer be terrible. Hence the apostle exclaims, *O death, where is thy sting?* For if Christ be risen, it is a proof that the debt is paid; and that *sin*, which kills us all, is no longer imputed.

From the history of man it is known, that if sin had not entered, man would not have died; for death cometh by sin; without it there would have been none. The life of paradise would have been sustained perpetually by the tree of life. But when man fell into sin, he was driven from the tree of life, to return to the dust out of which he was taken. To restore that life which we lost in Adam, and give us that to which the tree of life would have raised us, the Saviour came into the world. How much more than this his own words may promise to us, we cannot affirm; but he tells us—*I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more*

abundantly: whence we may gather indubitably, that the life which we obtain through Christ is better than we should have derived from Adam; and that for this reason he is called the *Tree of Life:* he does what that would have done, and more: and as we have no title but through him, he is therefore called *our Life.*

It is a plain doctrine, and generally understood, that Christ becomes our life by his resurrection from the dead; and that therefore he calls himself the resurrection and the life: but the gospel teaches, that Christ is our life before the resurrection of the body; there being a resurrection to grace and newness of life, which begins here, and is the pledge and earnest of the resurrection of the body. Modern Christians seem to think that the christian religion is a history (a very *true* history) of things without us: but is it not also a history of something *within* us? does it not also preach up a principle of life, given to Christians at this time, and distinguishing them from a dead world that lieth in darkness? is not Christ *now* a life to animate and revive the dead; as well as a light to instruct the ignorant? Doth not the prophet say the same—*awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall*

shall give thee light? Can the sun of the spring shew itself, without raising the roots that lie buried in the earth? Even so, he that gives *light* must give *life* at the same time, and by the same act. And this must be the life of which Christ himself speaketh, where he saith, *he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* This must be meant of that spiritual life with which we now live: and the occasion on which the words were spoken, the resurrection of Lazarus, relates to the same: for Martha had said, I know that he *shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* But this confession was not sufficient; the resurrection of Lazarus was to shew something *more:* it was to shew, not only that the hour is coming, but that it *now is*, when the dead in sin hear his voice and come forth. Reason therefore requires that the words which follow should be strictly taken—"I am the resurrection and the life"—and were they not strictly fulfilled, when the Gentile world were raised up by the gospel from that hopeless death of sin in which they lay? And are they not now fulfilled in every sinner, who at this time is raised up from the *death of sin to the life of righteousness?*

righteousness? To such Jesus Christ is *now* the resurrection and the life: but there are many who say with Martha, that they believe *the resurrection at the last day*, without seeming to regard or understand *this:* but blessed and holy is he who hath part in this *first* resurrection: to him Christ is truly *the life;* and over him the second death shall have no power.

I have now shewed you, how just a description the text hath given us of Jesus Christ; and from that you may learn the value of his religion; and what a blessing it is to us all that we are still in possession of it; for if we lose that, we lose all. The world would no longer be a place fit to live in. If there be any such thing as a religion without Christ, you may judge what it must be: it can neither shew us the way, nor tell us the truth, nor give us the life; and that must be a strange religion. It has no teacher to shew us the way; no mediator to prepare it. It leaves us like sheep in a desert; departed from God, and not knowing how to return to him. If we try to be wise, we are *ever learning, and r able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* ve are shocked at the brevity and vanity of

of man in this world, we see no remedy. The richest and fairest parts of the earth, whatever trees and fruits they may produce, have no *tree of life*. Death reigns without controul: for whatsoever the various schemes of man's wisdom may promise, not one of them all ever pretended to give *life*.

How devoutly thankful ought we to be for that inestimable blessing which God hath bestowed upon us, in giving us his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life! The *way* to heaven lies right before us, and is so plain that a child may find it. We have knowledge of that *truth*, which is above all truth: and we partake of that *life*, which is a life of eternity.

We shall be thankful in the only proper manner, and as God requires, if we take advantage of these blessings, and use them as we ought.

Therefore, if Christ be the way; let us return to God by him: let us pray, with him for our intercessor; and then we shall have access to God. It is the custom in the East to this day for persons to gain access to some great and powerful man, by sending an offering before them to prepare the way. Our offering is Christ:

Christ: we offer him to the Father, and we are *accepted in the beloved.* Paradise itself is open to those who seek it in this manner: no flaming sword is now in the way, to stop them from the tree of life.

If Christ be the *Truth,* let us find him in the word of truth. Let us learn how he is the end of the law for righteousness: how it all points to him, and is fulfilled in him. Let us look unto him through the works of the creation, and learn how he is the truth of nature: the true *vine;* the true *bread;* the true *light;* the truth of every thing our eyes can see, that is great and valuable in the world. Till we see this use and sense of nature, the sun may give light to our *eyes,* but it gives none to our *minds.*

If Christ be *the Life,* let him be *our* life. As man liveth not by the bread of earth alone, but by the bread of heaven; let us go out to gather that manna, where it is to be found (and *as often* as it is to be found) at the table of the Lord. Christ our passover being sacrificed for us, let us keep the feast: and let us think it a feast; as indeed it is, in comparison of which all that is in the world is emptiness and faine. Christ being also the true Tree of Life, e old prohibition is no longer in force against us;

us; we may now with safety *put forth our hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

inherit the promise; because the promise had been made to the faith of Abraham before the law; and had it afterwards been given to the law, it would have been taken from faith; and so the whole together would have been a contradiction. But as the promise had first been given to faith, it could not be given to the law afterwards; and it was not given: for the law answers other purposes, as we shall see.

That the promise is given to faith, the case of the great father of the Church was intended to shew. God called Abraham from his friends, that he might *go out to a land which he had not seen:* he commanded him to devote his son to God, and he obeyed: in consequence of which he received the promise.—*Now I know that thou fearest God—thou didst not withhold thy son—in blessing I will bless thee,* &c. Few words are here wanted to shew, what sort of religion is most pleasing to God. It is the religion of Abraham; which leaves father and mother, and forsakes the world, at the call of God; which believes his word, while appearances argue the contrary; and resigns itself to his will, though he requires what is most valuable in life. In a word, it shews, that God is pleased with faith, and that without faith it is impossible to please him—*he believed in the Lord,*

his pleasure, his children, his friends, when God requires; and then he will have Christ in return. This is the true religion, which leads men to salvation, and which always did so; and it is as plain and easy as it is true.

But with this religion of faith, there was another sort of service, another necessary rule of obedience to God, called *the law:* concerning which the text informs us, that they who were of it could not be *heirs;* that is, could not thereby be intitled to inherit the blessing which God had promised to Abraham. And, I believe, whoever shall examine the law of Moses, will find that no such promise is any where added to the works of the law. The apostle expressly declares the contrary: *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight:* and again; *a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Rom. iii. 20, 28. Certain it is then, that if the law cannot *justify*; it could give life; and if it could not give it, it could not promise it; and accordingly it never did. But here the Jew made a fatal mistake. He went about, thinking it possible to establish the sufficiency of his own righteousness by the deeds of the law; and so he failed of that other righteousness which God had imputed to Abraham. It is no disparagement to the law

of Moses, that it did not give righteousness; nor should we hence imagine that the law and the promise were in opposition: God forbid! for if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; it was the most excellent system which could be for the purpose: but from the nature of man *that* could not possibly be. The scripture had concluded all men, had as it were shut them all up together, under a sentence of sin and condemnation: so that justification must be brought in some other way; which way is that of faith; and a counting of that for righteousness, which in itself was not righteousness, till God pleased to make it so. It would surely have been a strange thing, if the law had promised what it could not give: and much hath been said about this to little purpose: but there is in the mean time a great and useful question which deserves to be answered. For if the law could not give life, what was the design of it, and what end did it answer? The apostle instructs us, that it was *added because of transgression*; and that it was a *schoolmaster* unto Christ. We are therefore to examine into the signification of these two characters.

And first, the law was *added because of transgression.*

transgression. If it was *added*, there was something in use *before it*, to which it was added by way of *preservation*, in order to lessen transgression for the time to come. The case was this: from Adam to Noah, and down to Abraham, there had been a practice of divine worship, which comprehended the chief institutions of that law which was afterwards written. This worship, the people whom we call Heathens, and who are supposed to have arisen from the confusion at Babel, had corrupted, and had turned the rites of it to the service of false gods; whom they worshipped with such abominable practices as made them hateful to the true GOD, and of course very dangerous companions to his people. That Abraham might escape this danger, God called him from his family, who are said to have served other gods; (Josh. xxiv. 2.) and for the same reason his posterity were separated from all other people: and when they were to be settled in the land of Canaan, the nations of Idolaters were driven out. The first form in which God gave his law was that of the ten commandments; and the first of these forbids the worship of strange gods; as doth the second the invention of images, which was the constant wickedness of the heathens. And this, without any thing

farther, is sufficient to shew, what kind of transgression the law was added to prevent, and who the transgressors were. What the witchcraft was which drew mankind away to the belief and worship of false Gods, it may not be easy for us, at this distance of time, to detect and understand. The shortest way is to suppose, what is certainly true, that idolatry was a subtle invention of the devil: and we know what he can do, and what absurdities men can receive and embrace, from what is at this time stirring in the world. Certain it is, that the company of these Heathens always was a snare to the people of God; of whom it is too truly said, that they *transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.* We are to note well that expression, *they went a whoring:* for as fornication and adultery are lusts of the *body;* so is disaffection to the true God, and a love of unclean idols, a lust of the *mind;* which ill company and bad teaching are sure to excite. For this cause God divided his people from the Heathens, and laid them under every possible obligation for their security, by institutions of the law of Moses; as a good would keep his son from the seducing company

company of profligates and blasphemers. Many of the Mosaic laws are preservatives against heathenism: but there is one law, of equal effect with all the rest: this is, the distinction of meats into clean and unclean, in the 11th of Leviticus. By this law Heathens and Jews could not eat together, and so could not live together. God tells them in direct words, that the design of this law was to keep them separate from the Heathens, and all their abominable customs—*ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy, and have severed* you from other people that ye should be mine.

Thus was the law concerning beasts understood; for this end was it observed; and thus is it applied and interpreted in the Acts of the Apostles: where Peter, referring to his vision of the animals in the sheet, saith; *ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me* (by putting an end to the distinction of meats) *that I should not* (now) *call any man common or unclean.* The separation was now at an end; and therefore this law, which had kept it up, was no more to be observed.

This law, as I have said, which forbid them to *eat* with Heathens, made it impossible to

live with them; and this might be sufficient to account for it. But it is delightful to see, how that law which kept up the distinction, comprehended in itself the sense and reason of the distinction. Forbidden meats were so fixed on as to resemble forbidden men; and lawful meats, properly understood, were so many lessons of purity, patience, obedience, and integrity.

To this question then, *wherefore serveth the law?* the apostle, we see, is right in one of his answers: it was *added* to the Patriarchal religion, to prevent those *transgressions* and abominations which heathenism had brought into it. In his second reason we shall find him as right as in the first; namely, that the law was a *schoolmaster unto Christ.* And when Christ came, the Jews, who had been under this schoolmaster, ought to have known him immediately, and to have said: "These new and wonderful things, which we are taught to believe of Jesus Christ, are the very same in sense and substance with what we all have seen and been acting over from the beginning of our law. As children are sent to a schoolmaster to acquire the first rudiments of learning, so have we been brought up to learn these things: and as children are shut up

in

in a school, so have we been shut up from the world, to practise over continually those signs and figures which describe to us Jesus Christ."

For, is Jesus Christ a mediator between God and man? And had not we our mediator, Moses, between God and us, at Mount Sinai? Is Christ the true high priest of God? And have not we always been used to the sight of an high priest and his ministry? Is he a sacrifice for the sin of the world? And hath not the blood of sacrifices always been shed amongst us for atonement and sanctification, and always taught us that without shedding of blood there is no remission? Is Christ the lamb of God redeeming us by his blood, and turning away the wrath of God? And did not a lamb in Egypt save us by its blood from the destroying angel, when the first-born of Egypt were slain? They say Christ is the true passover. And is he not in every respect like the passover we have been used to? How wonderful is it that his bones were not broken when he hung upon the cross! but were not we forbidden to break a bone of the paschal lamb? They say he hath ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us: and did not our high priest go yearly into the most holy place of the

temple, and return from thence to bless the people, as the Comforter is now sent down from Jesus Christ in heaven? These and many other like things have we learned under our schoolmaster the law; and if we do not now see and understand them, after we have so long been used to them, we must be lost in ignorance, and incapable of receiving information.

What I have here said for the Jew, he should have said for himself; and he *would* have said it, had not the love of this world, together with a vain trust in the letter of the law, and in his own righteousness built upon it, blinded his eyes and hardened his heart. And when he had blundered in the beginning, by rejecting Jesus for not encouraging him in the love of this world; his pride would never condescend to compare the figures of the law, to see whether these things were so. He had determined that Jesus was not the Christ before he had enquired; so he would never enquire after he had determined. Wonder not that the Jew thus erred; for for the Christian world is still full of such Jewish scholars, who begin where they should end; who first determine, and are never afterwards disposed to enquire. Instead of beginning with the wisdom of God, and from thence deriving the wisdom of man, they begin with what man has

has established, and thereby they judge God, as the Jews crucified Christ.

An examination of the text has enabled us to lay down such certain principles as will correct some modern mistakes. The law, you see, did not give life. It could not give it, because the promise had given it before: and had the law given it, the promise must have lost it.—Some have hence concluded, that the Jews under the law had no knowledge of another life and another world. But what do they mean? that while the Jews practised the book of Leviticus, they were not permitted to read the book of Genesis, which told them of the fall of man from life to death; of the promised seed; of the life, and pilgrimage, and death, and burial, of the patriarchs; of the intercourse of man with God and with his angels? Could they know these things, and know nothing of another world? Is such an opinion worthy of a man of learning, which is scarcely worthy of a child? We allow it to be true as a fact, that the Jews preferred the carnal part of their law, and neglected the spiritual: but it is much to be lamented that any Christians should follow them in their mistake, and lay the fault upon the bible, as if the books of Moses were wholly secular. But as this has been done, it was wise

wise in the Church of England to provide against this error in her seventh article; where we are rightly taught, that *in the Old Testament and New everlasting life is offered to mankind by Jesus Christ; and that they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises.*

It seems indeed true, that the promises of God, so far as they are added to the law of works, are transitory, and do relate to this world only. The promises of the law are given to two covenants; so it has promises and *better promises* *; promises temporal, and promises spiritual. And are not Christians at this day upon the same terms? have they not a promise of this world, and of that which is to come? I look upon the cases of the Jew and the Christian as perfectly similar; and that as temporal blessings were given to the due observance of the law of Moses, so the promise of this world is given to the keeping of God's commandments, while faith only can entitle us to the promise of the world to come.

A good argument for the divine original of the law of Moses may be founded upon its temporal promises. For who but God, the Proprietor of the World, and the Disposer of all Events, could

* Heb. viii. 6. See Eph. ii. 12.

could fulfil those promises? Human lawgivers have added *punishments* and *penalties*, for those are in their power; but they never added *promises*, which were out of their power. Who was it that could bring armies of aliens to vex and punish the sins of Israel; and who could turn them to flight, but the same God, who could blow with his wind, and carry an army of locusts into the Red Sea? Therefore a law promising and threatening such things as are above man, could come only from God, who was able to fulfil his promises. And unless the nation, who were so many ages under the law, had found them true, they would have had no reason to remain any longer under it. The argument is very plain, and can never be answered.

When we reflect on the case of the Jews, and the principle on which they fell away, it must occur to our minds (because we see too much of it before our eyes) that Christians fall away after the same example. They are born under the promises of the gospel; but they aim at nothing more than the keeping up of a moral character, because common honesty is absolutely requisite to those who would obtain and enjoy the blessings of this life. But when will you find such people at their bibles? When will you

you find them at their prayers? When will you find them at any good work for the love of Christ, and the prospect of an heavenly kingdom? If all these were selected out of a country called Christian (profligates and atheists I take not into the account), and we were to add to them the multitude of those who justify themselves, and expect to be saved by their own works as the Jews did, there would be left a remnant, but only a remnant, of those who keep the faith, and follow the steps, and look for the reward of their father Abraham.

That we may understand these things better every day, may God of his mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

Rahab and Jericho

HEB. XI. 30, 31.

BY FAITH THE WALLS OF JERICHO FELL DOWN, AFTER THEY WERE COMPASSED ABOUT SEVEN DAYS.

BY FAITH THE HARLOT RAHAB PERISHED NOT WITH THEM THAT BELIEVED NOT, WHEN SHE HAD RECEIVED THE SPIES WITH PEACE.

IT is the doctrine of the gospel, that salvation is from faith, and destruction from unbelief. In this scripture the apostle sets before us a striking example of both, in the fall of the city of Jericho, and the deliverance of Rahab the harlot.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen: by which it is to be understood, that faith *proves* to

to the mind of a believer what cannot be proved by other evidence: viz. that the promise of God shall be brought to pass, while as yet there is neither sign, nor appearance, nor any reason to expect it, other than the word which has foretold it. Thus, in the case before us, the walls of Jericho were to be overthrown, and the people within the city were to be destroyed. In order to this, priests were commanded to blow with trumpets, and the walls were to be encompassed seven days. It certainly did not appear how this harmless ceremony could tend to destroy a besieged city; no city had ever been destroyed by means of such a cause; but the people, believing it would be made the cause, complied with the ceremony, and the effect followed.

You are not in the situation of the Jews in the land of Canaan—but their case is nevertheless your own. You are tried; that is, your faith is tried, after the same manner as theirs was—you are taught to expect things, of which the producing cause is no cause, till God shall make it so; no more than the sound of a trumpet can shatter the wall of a city. You are commanded to be washed with water, that you may be born of the spirit, and that your sins may be forgiven: you are to receive power from

from above, by the laying on of the hands of man; but what relation is there between water and the spirit of God? What relation between the hands of man, and the powerful grace of God? Who sees all this? No man: But faith believes what it does not see: and this is the great trial by which God is pleased to prove his servants. The man of the world, who with an opinion of his own wisdom, has no faith in God, can never abide this test; but in order to maintain his own ground, he ridicules the whole plan of Christianity, or persecutes the preachers of it: he has no other weapons of controversial warfare. Such an one is not of the number of those that encompass the city, but of those who are shut up within it, and are consequently devoted to destruction. The men of Jericho, when they saw from the wall how the priests and the people were occupied, and how fruitlessly they were employed, must have judged the whole to be no better than an unmeaning pageantry, dictated by folly and madness: they could see no relation between the apparent cause that was acting, and the effect that was to follow; and in all probability were deriding the Hebrews, and encouraging one another in their unbelief and insolence, till the moment, when, at the command of God, his

his people shouted, and sudden destruction came upon them.

From this destruction, one person of the city is delivered; and she, as we should think, a most unlikely person; even the harlot Rahab. But the text gives us the reason of this: *by* FAITH *the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.* All the people of Jericho had heard of Israel, and of what God had done and was doing for them, as well as Rahab: but they did not believe, and she did. *I know*, said she, *that the Lord hath given you the land; now therefore swear unto me, that ye will shew me kindness, and deliver our lives from death.* When the king of Jericho was informed that the spies were with her, he sent to demand them; but she hid them till the danger was past. She did all this at the peril of her own life; for had she been discovered in what she had done, she would surely have been put to death: but she brought herself into present danger, to obtain future deliverance for herself and her relations, which accordingly was granted soon after; and she is an example to us at this day. For this history of Jericho and Rahab is to be fulfilled upon the world, and those that dwell therein: the world will be destroyed like Jericho, and the faithful will

will be saved like Rahab. The apostle speaks of the future judgment of the world in such terms as certainly allude to this history of Jericho. *The Lord himself*, says he, *shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God.* Observe here; it shall be the *Lord himself*, not Jesus the servant of Moses, but Jesus the son of God; the true *captain of our salvation*: and as the people *shouted* when Jericho fell, so shall there be a great shout of the host from heaven when this world shall fall. O how will the righteous be encouraged, and the wicked terrified, at the hearing of that shout! The trumpets also that sounded at Jericho, shall then prove figurative of the trumpet of the last judgment, called the *trump of God*: a thing not unknown to the people of Israel; for they had already heard the sound of it on Mount Sinai, as a prelude and earnest of that last sound which will shake the world. At that time will the faithful be delivered as Rahab was; whose example teaches us this lesson, that we are to believe what we have heard of the judgment which is soon to come upon us, and to make our peace against that time of vengeance, not regarding what the world may say, and what men may threaten, to terrify those who dare to take a

better part, for the sake of securing their own future deliverance. Rahab knew all that was said by the people of the city; but she was not moved from her purpose; the King's command did not terrify her; and at last she saved her life, by having ventured the loss of it: *she perished not with them that believed not.*

Such is the history of Jericho and of Rabab: on the particulars of which many important reflexions must arise to those who consider it. And first; the city of Jericho presents itself to us as a figure of this world, in which we now live: as being wicked; as being in opposition to God; as being blind to impending judgments. The people of Jericho are distinguished by the title of those that *believed not.* In this consisted the difference between them and Rahab. Had they believed as she did, they might have been saved as she was: but where unbelief hath once prevailed, how rarely is it corrected! The Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem had principles of their own, which would not suffer them to believe Jesus Christ to be the true Saviour: their pride would never give up their own false wisdom; and their covetousness would not give up the world; so all the miracles of Christ could not convince them. But publicans, and harlots, and all others to whom

whom sin was burthensome, and judgment frightful, believed and were saved. Every man that will not believe, has some wicked reasons for it; and he can never believe, till those reasons are given up: on which consideration, it is necessary that repentance should go before faith. What those reasons were in particular, which hindered the people of Jericho from believing, it may now be hard to enumerate: long established idolatry, with the habitual vices attending it, was sufficient; in which pride and presumption are among the chief. I believe, their high walls, and their miraculous downfall, were alluded to in those words of the apostle, where he says; *for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* Such weapons as men use in war, are called *carnal:* these were not employed against Jericho; but such only as were figurative and mystical, but which, nevertheless, are mighty through God to the casting down the walls of this proud city; such weapons as could have no effect but what he gave them. The gospel is such another

weapon; it is sounded by priests; and with the same effect: the high thoughts of man are brought down, and all imaginations fall before it *. In such wicked imaginations did the people of Jericho persist; and therefore they could not understand what was coming upon them. But observe, that though they continued firm to the last in their unbelief, they were far from being *easy*. The terror of destruction was upon them, and their hearts melted within them. Thus it is with wicked men: they suffer fear and terror from the state they are in; but it does them no good: they neither grow wiser nor better. What a deplorable case is this! but it was the case almost universally of those wicked nations of Canaan, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities: and such is the natural end, and last effect of sin: when it has blinded the eyes, it hardens the heart, and then there is no recovery to be expected. The judgments of God are then certain, and his justice is inflexible. When judgment is come, mercy is past; according to that terrible declaration by the prophet Amos; *I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.* How dreadful is it, when it comes to this! when God is determined upon punishment, then it soon

* See Isaiah, ii. 14.

soon appears what it is to *fall into the hands of the living God.*

But whatever a sinner may have been, if he returns and makes his peace while the day of mercy lasts, he is never cast out. This doctrine is exemplified in the case of Rahab; who was received to mercy when the city perished. This case, before it is well considered, may seem to give encouragement to sin. What? hath a wicked harlot nothing to do, but to believe and be saved? Here we are too hasty: for when she believed, what did she? She did not sit still to be idle and worthless; but as she believed, so she acted: she received the spies with peace; and saved their lives at the hazard of her own. Surely then, if he who gives only a cup of cold water as a testimony of his faith, is entitled to a reward; he who saves the life of another *on the same principle*, must be entitled to a greater.

This case of Rahab has given occasion to some reasonings in the scripture, which often are not rightly understood. In the text the apostle teaches us, that *by faith the harlot Rahab perished not:* but St. James asks; *was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* There is here an ap-

parent contradiction in words; but there is none in point of fact; for faith, and the work of faith, are in reality but one and the same thing: the faith produces the work; and the work proves the faith; and neither of these can be certain without the other. Faith which does not work is dead; and a work, if a work of faith, justifies: indeed faith itself is a work in the heart of man, and so the expression of St. James imports; for he says of Abraham, that faith *wrought* with his works; and so it was a *working*, that is, a *living* faith. But the most express declaration to this purpose is the answer of Christ to that question of the Jews; *what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* to which he answered, This is the *work* of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent. So that the dispute which men have raised about faith and works, is without foundation. When these two are asunder, they are nothing: when they are together, they are but the same thing. Faith that is alive will work; and the work will be good, because it is the work of *a believer*.

They who never considered the power and value of faith toward salvation, may learn how great it is from the history of Rahab's deliverance. When we are told, that Abraham was

justified

justified by faith, we do not wonder: we can believe any good of our father Abraham. But that it should avail to the saving of Rahab is extraordinary, and never to be accounted for by the man of the world. The just live by faith; that is, they are not saved for their justice, but for their faith: and if the best are not accepted without faith, the worst may not be condemned if they have it. But why is faith preferred in this manner above all things? I will tell you some of the reasons. Faith in God is a cure, because it is contrary to man's native distemper. Man began to sin with believing a lie: and he believed it when told by an enemy; by the enemy of God; as he is still disposed to do at this day; with what propriety of justice then can God receive the man, who refuses to believe HIM upon his word? Faith in the Enemy brought him to ruin, and keeps him in it: nothing can restore him, but its contrary; which is faith in God.

Another reason is, that the way of faith is contrary to the way of man's own wisdom; and is therefore the hardest trial that he can be put to. It is after the wisdom of God; but it has nothing of man's wisdom in it: it is contradictory to it all. This the wise man cannot bear to hear of; and he therefore pronounces it to be

folly. There are in the world two contrary descriptions or characters of men: the one has faith, the other has none: and they are so different in their conception of things, that each is considered as unwise by the other. The man of the world makes it a rule to believe nothing but what he sees: but the faith of the believer is a sight of the mind, which gives evidence of things not seen. There is no doctrine upon earth which mortifies the pride of man, like this of salvation by faith; it is therefore appointed as the great test by which man is proved. He cannot endure the thought, that his wisdom should be foolishness, and that his ostentatious virtues should be good for nothing. But he who cannot bear this mortification, he who will not freely make an offer of his mind to God, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. He persists in that rebellious desire of the mind, which first drew him away from God; and to shew him his mistake, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty. How is the worldly-wise offended, when the gospel tells him of a malefactor, translated from a cross to paradise! What rage will torment him, when he shall see the harlot Rahab admitted,

and

and himself shut out! But such are the ways of God: he exalteth the weak, and putteth down the mighty. Men may glory for a while in the appearance of their greatness: but their high walls will come to the ground. They may despise Rahab; but the best and the greatest of them all must submit to be saved, upon the same terms with that repentant and believing sinner of Jericho. They may talk to one another in high strains about virtue, and right, and degrees of credibility; but God regards them not: his salvation his bestowed upon the poor penitent, who believes that Jericho will soon fall; that destruction is coming upon the world of the ungodly; that the JUDGE standeth at the door; and who makes provision accordingly; securing an interest against the day of vengeance. They who would not be found, but persecuted the messengers of God (as unbelievers never fail to do) shall be involved in all the horror and confusion of a falling world: while they that have made their peace like Rahab, shall be sought out and delivered. God shall send his angels, to gather together his elect; who have made a covenant with him, through the *sacrifice* of Christ; and can produce the *scarlet* token of his blood, which marks them for the redeemed of the Lord: and

deed see yourself surrounded with destruction —with the destruction of many whom it would have rejoiced you to have saved: but it shall not touch *you:* ye shall be as a firebrand plucked out of the burning—angels shall be sent to take you out of the overthrow; ye will be saved as Rahab was; and *by faith, will not perish with them that believe not.*

SERMON

of description, for both of which the gospel is so superior to all other writings. But the story hath certainly a more deep design, than such a narrative might be supposed to have, if it had occurred in some other book: and this I think must be evident upon the following consideration. The precept—*go and do thou likewise*, is of general obligation. What our Saviour here said to the Jews, he said to all his disciples and followers to the end of the world. And if they are all bound to the practice of this precept, it is but natural to think, that they should all be interested in the circumstances of that narrative, on which the precept is grounded. It is the general design of the parables of Christ, to set before us the great and interesting principles of the gospel, under the form of something familiar to the understanding: therefore our blessed Saviour never relates any thing of this kind, but with some superior allusion: and if we take this story as a parable, representing to us under other terms that merciful act of redemption in which we are all equally concerned, then there will be no difficulty in making the example and the precept consistent with each other. I may add likewise, that in this Christian acceptation of the parable, we shall agree with all the best expositors of the Church,

Church, from the apostolic age to the present; which consideration will have its weight with all those, who are not poisoned with the pretended improvements of modern times. It is the general intention of the gospel, and of all its principles and doctrines in particular, to improve our understandings in the way of godliness, and encourage our endeavours to the practice of holiness. This passage of the scripture, when truly interpreted, will, like the rest, be found capable of answering both these purposes: with which persuasion, I shall now propose to your consideration the several particulars.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

If we suppose the *man* here spoken of to be *Adam*, departing first from innocence to sin, and next from paradise into the world; all the circumstances of the parable will fall naturally into this interpretation, and we shall soon be satisfied that the design of it is not misunderstood. The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho is plainly that from paradise into the world. In the book of Revelation, the names of "Jerusa-[illegible]" and "Paradise" are applied indifferently to

the same thing. The tree of life is spoken of as growing *in the midst of the* paradise *of God:* but in another place, the same tree of life is said to grow in the midst of the street of the new Jerusalem. Something of the like kind occurs in St. Paul; who tells us he was caught up to the *third heaven*, which he calls *paradise:* yet elsewhere, with allusion to the same paradise, he speaks of a *Jerusalem* that is *above*, which is the *mother of us all:* to which character, in a proper sense, the earthly paradise also had a title, in as much as all mankind are descended from it. And if it be true, that we *all died* in Adam, it will follow, that in him we all were once inhabitants of paradise; and the sin which drove Adam from that happy place, drove out his posterity with him. So long as Adam preserved his innocence, he was secure in his possession of paradise, and had a right of inheritance in the Jerusalem that is above; that heavenly original, of which the garden planted upon earth was but an earnest and a pattern. But when he disobeyed the divine command, he lost the present enjoyment of the inferior paradise, and at the same time forfeited his revertionary title to the superior. His departure therefore is very properly described as a *going down* from *Jerusalem:* the *fall* of man,

as

as the term necessarily signifies, being in every acceptation of it a *descent* from an higher to a lower state.

Nor is the place to which he descended less expressive than that of Jerusalem: for when Adam was expelled from Eden, he was removed into the *world*, of which the city Jericho was emblematical in several respects*. It was *accursed to the Lord* for the wickedness of its inhabitants, as this world is now subjected to a curse for the disobedience of man. Jericho was formally devoted to ruin and destruction; and the man who should attempt to rebuild it, was *to lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son to set up the gates of it*: which sentence was at length fulfilled upon *Hiel*, a presumptuous projector in the degenerate times of *Ahab*. The world itself is under a like sentence; being kept in store against the day of judgment. The walls of Jericho fell down flat, the city was *burned with fire*, and all that it was destroyed, on the *seventh day*, after sounding of the *trumpets* and the *shouting* of people. The world in like manner, according to the sense of antiquity, and some obscure intimations of the scripture, is expected to endure six thousand years, and to perish in the seventh,

* This idea enlarged on in the preceding discourse.

seventh, which answers to the sabbath; when the last trumpet shall sound, and the *Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.*— The *Lord himself* seems here in the language of the Apostle to be opposed to Joshua or Jesus his representative, and the circumstances attending the destruction of the world are selected and worded in such a manner, as to shew a plain allusion to the fall of Jericho*.

But we are now to follow our traveller, and to observe what happens to him upon his journey.

Ever since the introduction of evil, the constitution of this world hath been changed, and the Devil (together with the host of darkness) hath been permitted to establish his own empire in it; whence the devil is expressly called *the prince of this world.* Hence it cometh to pass, that no man can depart from paradise into the world, without falling into the hands of evil spirits, or, as the parable expresses it, without *falling among thieves.* For these are the thieves to whom our Lord seems to refer, where he commands us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where *thieves* do not break through nor steal. The *moth* which devours the garment of the

* Compare 1 Thess. iv. 16, and v. 3, with Joshua, chap. 6.

body, is *death* * : the *rust* whereby the soul is darkened and defiled, is *sin* : and the malignant powers of hell are the *thieves* which steal away our treasure; who, according to the character given of them in another parable, endeavour to *steal* the word of *God out of the heart* as soon as it is laid up there.

If we examine the marks of violence which they left on the man who went down to Jericho, it will soon be discovered that they are the thieves intended by this parable. Devils, like men, may be known by their acts; as a lion may be distinguished from other beasts by the print of his foot. For in the first place, these thieves *stripped* the traveller *of his raiment*: Adam, when he had sinned, found himself *naked*. Then they *wounded him*; sin was the weapon, and mortality was the effect of it; for it was said, "*in the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die.*" While Christ was upon earth, it was his custom to signify his power in curing the distempers of the soul, and renewing it again to purity and holiness, by restoring all the diseased faculties of the body. So the Destroyer, whose actions are opposite to those of the Saviour, made it his practice to commit such acts of violence upon the

* Isaiah li. 8, fear ye not *men*, for the *moth* shall eat them up like *a garment*.

the body as corresponded exactly with his destructive attempts upon the spirit. For, according to the pattern of this original stripping and wounding in the parable, the poor demoniac in the country of the Gadarenes, who was possessed by a legion of these thieves, *ware no clothes;* he wandered amongst the mountains and the tombs night and day, crying, and *cutting himself with stones.* We read also, that when the *evil spirit* had prevailed over the seven sons of *Sceva*, they fled out of that house NAKED *and wounded.* All of which presents us with a wonderful uniformity in the operations of the Devil, who delights himself with every thing that looks like a repetition of that mischief and cruelty which he first committed in the fall of Adam.

When the thieves had *stripped* the man and *wounded* him, *they departed:* their malice had effected all its purposes; righteousness was stolen from him, and the sting of death was left in him. But here the case is very particular: they left him *half dead.* Sin was not the immediate death of Adam, in a bodily sense; but he died in spirit on the very day in which he sinned, and so his better half was dead: in consequence of which, the death of the body would necessarily follow. The man who is mortally

wounded, may languish for a considerable time; but he has the earnest of death in him, and its effect must at length be completed.

Such is the present state of every son of Adam; from which neither the prince, nor the warrior, nor the philosopher, is exempt. The first may glory in his honours, the second in his conquests, and the last in his contemplations: but whatever they may think of themselves, these thieves have prevailed against them all; they are stripped, wounded, and half dead, in the sight of God, and also in the sight of those who are taught by divine revelation to distinguish between appearances and realities.

The case now before us being difficult, and almost desperate, let us enquire what help is to be met with?

The parable proceeds to inform us, that by chance there came down a certain Priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

By the *Priest* and *Levite*, we are to understand the Mosaic law, which was administered by these two orders of men, the sons of Aaron, and the tribe of Levi; or perhaps we shall not err, if we take these figurative persons for the patriarchal

patriarchal and legal dispensations; the former, as well as the latter, having been distinguished by priesthood and sacrificature, ever since the commencement of our present condition. These persons came to the place, and looked upon the wounded man, as might be expected; because the law, whether written or traditional, was not made for *a righteous man*, but for the *ungodly and for sinners*, and would of course point out to them the fallen condition of human nature. They both looked upon him, but could afford him no relief: his wound was *sin*; and the blood of bulls and of goats, which they administered, cannot take away sin. So far then was the law from furnishing any effectual remedy to be applied by the Priest and Levite, that it could only shew the wounds to be mortal, and by their endeavours to be incurable. The Priest and the Levite therefore must leave him as they found him: they cannot make any atonement to God for him, but must pass by on the other side, and *let that alone for ever*.

But *what the law could not do*, was at length effected by Him who cometh after the Levite, who is himself *the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe. For a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to the place*

where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. The unbelieving Jews, who were fond of representing Jesus Christ as a person false to the interests of his own people, and as one who upon that account should be deemed an alien and an outcast, appealed to him once in these insolent terms—*Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan?* There was then a particular aversion in the Jews toward the *Samaritans;* therefore they meant this for a name of the utmost contempt and reproach. Nevertheless, under all this reproach, we take that person to us as a Saviour, who was to them as a Samaritan; and in this we follow the example of our MASTER himself, who hath thought fit to exhibit a Samaritan to us, under the character of a Saviour. In the person of this Samaritan then, we see the second Adam looking with *compassion* upon the first: the great High Priest of the human species, *touched with the feeling of their infirmities,* and administering relief to his *enemies.* A *Samaritan,* saving a Jew in distress, affords us an example of disinterested and ineffable mercy, and as such doth aptly illustrate the condescension and love of that Saviour, who offered himself for those that reviled him as an alien, and who deemed malicious Jews and profane heathens the objects of his compassion:

passion: as if he had said—"You have in this Samaritan the pattern of a true neighbour, who, generously overlooking all the foolish animosities arising from pride and personal considerations, chuses his worst enemy as a fit object of his mercy; attending first and chiefly to the distress that presented itself, without standing to consider the description of the sufferer." The journey he took was that of the incarnation, which called upon him to take the same course with his brethren, whom he followed from Jerusalem toward Jericho, that he might bring them back with him on the way from earth toward heaven. In the course of this journey, he came into this vale of tears, and found miserable man naked and helpless upon the earth; and as he came from heaven in the capacity of a physician to the soul, he was furnished with every thing necessary to counteract the works of the Devil. When he had found the wretched object of his compassion, he went to him, and bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Each of these particulars is well worthy of a particular consideration; and as you may possibly begin to find yourselves interested in the event of this narrative, I hope you will bestow some attention upon them.

His first act was that of *binding up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine**: which passage is worth regarding in its physical acceptation; for wine hath an abstersive sharpness in it, which renders it of sovereign use for the *cleansing* of wounds; while it is the nature of oil to *heal*, on which account it is a general ingredient common to all ointments, the use of which is to mollify and heal, when the wound is properly cleared and prepared for them. But the virtue of oil is most remarkable when applied to the bite of a serpent, particularly a viper, for which it is now publicly received as an infallible cure, and the experiment is very common in this age. To our understanding such an effect is almost miraculous, for oil is a liquor, in all appearance inactive, insipid, and incapable of penetrating in such a manner as to do any good; yet few substances are more quick in their operation, nor is there a fluid in the world which will pass through the body of steel itself in so short a time.

The application of all this is plain enough.—The wine poured by the Saviour into the wounds of

* An ointment is now in use with many under the name of the *Samaritan Balsam*. It is composed of sound old wine d to a consistence with an equal quantity of olive oil.—f great efficacy for the cure of green wounds.

of man, is his own precious *blood*, which as St. John expresses it, *cleanseth us from all sin.* By the *oil* is signified the power of the holy Spirit, *which healeth all our infirmities;* and which in baptism restores what sin and Satan had destroyed.

The misery of sin, and the cure of it, are represented under the like terms in other figurative parts of the holy scripture. Isaiah thus describes the corrupt state of the people of his own time—"from the sole of the foot even to the head" (that is, from the lowest of the people up to the princes and rulers) "there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." The prophet David, in the person of a natural man, describes his own case in similar expressions—"There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any health in my bones by reason of my sin—my wounds stink and are corrupt, through my foolishness." Then on the other hand, there are promises to the poor and helpless, that the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, neither will he deliver him unto the will of his enemies—the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, and will make all his bed in his sickness—

for

for he healeth the broken hearted, and bindeth up their wounds. Psal. cxlvii. 3.

The second act of this Samaritan was to *set* the wounded man *upon his own beast.* No sinner hath any natural ability to rise from the earth, and convey himself to a place of safety: any more than a man lying half dead upon the ground can stand upright and find help for himself by the strength of his own limbs. With the divine help man is brought to a new state: he is removed from the perils and dangers of the world, to find health and refreshment in the Church of God; for the parable adds—*he brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* The life of a Christian is that of a pilgrim, or way-faring man, upon his journey from this world of vanity to the heavenly city of God; and to preserve a sense of this journey, as well as of their pilgrimage from Egypt, the Israelites were commanded to eat the passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands; that is, equipped in all respects as travellers. In the road to heaven we find the Church, which, like an *inn, receives* all that will come to it, and is open indifferently to people of all nations. The question is never put to any stranger, whether he is Jew

or

or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian, bond or free: these distinctions are of no more account in the christian Church than at an inn on the highway: all men being accepted, and their wants supplied in this place of accommodation. The master of it, standing before the door, and seeing the weary traveller pass by, calls out to him with the voice of hospitality and mercy—*Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* In this place, the Samaritan is said to have tarried a while with his charge, in order to settle things that were necessary toward his perfect recovery. *And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, "take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee."* By the host we are here to understand the ministers and rulers of the Church, to whom at his departure Christ committed the care of every returning sinner: and that they may be enabled to supply all their wants, he hath committed to them the Holy Scriptures under the form of the two Testaments, which it is the proper business of the host to expound, enforce, and apply for the support of those who are committed to their charge. The ministers of the church are stewards of the mysteries

the miserable object herein described, it appears that no man hath any thing to boast of, in the great work of his salvation. This wounded man doth not find the Samaritan, but the Samaritan finds him. How sensible soever he might be of his own misery, he knew nothing of the person who was able and willing to give him relief: and had he known it ever so perfectly, he was unable to seek after him.

It is thus with every Christian: he does not find the gospel, but the gospel finds him. He doth not indeed so much as know his own misery, till he is told of it: nor hath he sense to seek for any relief till it is offered to him, and in some cases almost forced upon him against his will. Happy therefore and wise also is he, who submits himself with thankfulness to the mercy of God, for the saving of his own soul; even as this poor traveller committed himself to the hands of the Samaritan for the healing of his wounds.

Many there are who lie in the way of mercy, without receiving any benefit. The TRUE SAMARITAN visits them with his institutions, his scriptures, his sacraments, and would convey them to his Church from all the perils to which they are exposed: but they remain insensible of their misery; either denying that they

they have any wounds, or endeavouring to bind up and heal them in their own way. There is one sect of Christians in particular, who will have neither oil nor wine from the Saviour of mankind, rejecting both baptism and the supper of the Lord. Others, through sloth and carelessness, will lie bleeding to death, rather than be disturbed with the process of their own deliverance. A man who hath lain abroad in the field, naked and wounded, finds the benefit of an inn, and is sensible of the change: while they who are born and brought up from their childhood under the advantages of the gospel, sink into stupidity, and become as indifferent to the means of grace, and all the mysteries of divine mercy, as if there were no such things to be heard of upon earth.

O fools, and blind! do men ever behave in this senseless manner with respect to their bodily wounds? A man will give all that he hath for the saving of his life, while he neglects to have his soul saved, though it might be saved for nothing. This corporeal pain is felt and understood; while the misery of a soul wounded by the Devil, is never felt, or never complained of.

It appears, secondly, that works of mercy are required of every follower of Christ: for nothing

can

can be plainer than the admonition which directs us to follow the example of this Samaritan. He who refuses this upon any consideration, conducts himself as if he were no neighbour to his fellow creatures, nor they to him; but keeps himself in a lofty abstracted state, like that hateful tribe of Pharisees and hypocrites, whose felicity seemed to consist in a contempt for other men: and he who misunderstands this great duty toward his neighbour, which comprehends one half of the divine law, will have but a partial title to the inheritance of eternal life: like that narrow-minded teacher of the law to whom this parable was directed, and whose principles were condemned out of his own mouth.

Lastly and chiefly, we are hence to learn the motive and source from which all our works of mercy are to be derived. The faith which receives the christian redemption, and the gratitude which that faith will inspire, should lead us to the practice of goodness and mercy toward all mankind, as well as to those who are of the household of faith. Christ hath here proposed his own example to us, and we are to have compassion upon others, even our very enemies, as he had compassion upon us in the same state. Grant, therefore, O blessed Lord,

that

that thy people may know how to value and imitate thy example, how meanly soever their spirit and their practice may be esteemed by a proud and mistaken world. Above all, grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries, to whom thou hast committed the inestimable means of grace in thy Church, may not *pass by*, like the unprofitable Priest and Levite, but carry on that great work, which thou thyself didst descend from heaven to begin amongst us. As thou hast shewed thyself a *neighbour to him that fell among thieves*, let them *go and do likewise.*

AN

ESSAY ON MAN,

ACCORDING TO THE

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

CHAPTER I. *Of Man under Sin.*

CHAPTER II. *Of his Redemption through Christ crucified.*

CHAPTER III. *Of the New Creature.*

INTRODUCTION.

NO man can satisfy himself or others about the Origin of Evil: and to give an account of man, without any account of evil, is to do little. The question being far too deep for us, we must be contented with such a view of the subject, as the gospel presents to us; and this should make us easy, till we have further lights, and stronger faculties.

The disciples of Jesus Christ, seeing a man who had been blind from his birth, proposed the case as a difficulty for which they were not able to account: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind * ?" They expected that their Master would consider the question as they did; but instead of this,

* John ix. 2. (See Sermon VIII.)

he takes such a view of the case, and gives such a solution of it, as they had not been able to conceive. He goes at once to the final cause, for which this, and all other examples of evil, are permitted in the world; the glory of God.—Strange, that God should be glorified in evil, by which he seems to be dishonoured; but so it is.

If we ask ourselves *by what causes* such or such strange effects come to pass; experience teaches us how hard it is to answer the question: but if we ask, *for what end*, the enquiry becomes more hopeful, as well as more useful. In the ways of God, the grounds and reasons, on which the Divine justice proceeds, are out of our sight; while the ends, which the Divine goodness has in view, are open to our sight, and level to our capacities. This we suppose to be the reason why our Saviour gave a turn to the question, so different from what his disciples expected. *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents*, said he, *i. e.* so as to account for his blindness; but he was born blind for this end,

end, *that the works of God might be made manifest in him.*

To all questions of the same kind, the same answer will serve. Evil is permitted in the world, that God may be manifested to us as the author of good. The sun is never so glorious as at his rising, when the shadows of the night fly before him. The Creator might have blessed us with perpetual day; but his wisdom and goodness are better understood in the victory which light obtains over darkness. And it is not clear, that good can be effectually distinguished, and received as what it is, till we have had the opportunity of comparing it with its contrary. The attributes of God were more fully displayed in the restoration of a man who was born blind, than if he had been born with his eye-sight. The physician derives his honour, not from the healthy, but from the sick; and the health which comes after sickness is doubly valuable.—The mind may be insensible of its *preservation*, and yet feel and understand the blessing of a

recovery. Sensations of wonder and gratitude may be excited in the patient himself, and in the friends who are witnesses to his cure; of which they would have had no experience, but for the evil of his disease, and the unexpected blessing of its removal.

If, on such an occasion as this, any one were to dwell on the difficulties of the case, the symptoms of the distemper, the skill displayed in the cure; and all with a view to the honour of the physician; the patient would be a strange man, if he should be offended, and mistake all this for a reflection upon himself, and his late infirmity: he would join with delight in recounting the wonders of his deliverance, and in magnifying the skill by which it had been brought to pass. Yet such is the absurdity of human wisdom, that the philosophy of the present day is offended with an heathen, if he speaks truth like a Christian. Pliny, the natural historian, observes, that the weakness and misery of man's nature is such that it seems a sin to be born. A Christian editor takes it as an affront upon himself;

self; and puts the following note upon it—*Hæc humanæ naturæ convicia à verâ philosophiâ maximè abhorrent.*

Every Christian, whose eyes are really opened, may apply what I have said to himself.—God is the PHYSICIAN; his power and goodness are magnified in healing the infirmities of our nature. If we feel ourselves offended with the consideration of this, that offence is one of the worst symptoms of our disease. The weakness of human reason, says the great Pascal, appears more in those who are insensible of it, than in such as know and confess it. We have no honour to maintain against our Creator; and his honour may well consist with our abasement. The apostle was convinced of this, when he said—*Most gladly will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* But such doctrine as this never did, nor ever will, agree with human pride, which pleases itself with other sentiments; how wisely and justly it will soon appear from what follows. Yet, after all that can be said, the Pha-

risees will still ask, with a sneer upon the goodness of God, *are we blind?* Blessed and happy is he who can reply against them—*One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*

AN

ESSAY ON MAN.

CHAPTER I.

Of Man under Sin.

DURING the state of man's innocence, an harmony was established between the body and the spirit. The ruling principle preserved its superiority, and the inferior was under due regulation: the appetites were subordinate to the will; sense was governed by reason; the body was subject to the spirit; and all were in obedience to God. Peace was the immediate fruit of this subjection; and immortality would have been its reward. But it is the uniform doctrine

doctrine of the Scripture, that since the entrance of sin, human nature is become degenerate; and that under this degeneracy, sense overcomes reason, the appetites corrupt the will, and the will is so inclined to evil, that it cannot be turned toward God, till it is *called* and *moved* thereto by his *grace*. When the Scripture speaks of man in this state, it represents him as alienated from God, darkened in his understanding, averse to righteousness, in captivity and bondage to sin, and subject to wrath and condemnation. The reason and equity of all this I am not enquiring into: I speak only of the fact; and it will appear from the Scripture, compared with the natural state of man, that the fact is as it is here represented. It is not necessary that we should take a large compass in order to shew this: the Apostle St. *Paul*, who insists frequently and earnestly upon this subject, hath saved us the trouble, by collecting into one view the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament relating to the depravity of the human character.

In his Epistle to the *Romans*, he begins with describing the deplorable corruption of the Gentiles under their apostasy. And as the Jew was apt to value himself upon comparison with them, the Apostle checks his vanity,

nity, by informing him, that nature is the same in all men: that the Jew had little advantage of the Heathen, except that *the oracles of God were committed to him.* Coming still nearer to the point, he asks, *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* Then he proceeds to confirm this by an induction of particulars from the writings of the Old Testament. "As it is written; there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." These expressions, collected from the Psalms and the Prophets, are to be understood as evidences of the proposition before advanced, that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin: and they mark out so particularly the several species of depravity, to which the sinfulness

fulness of nature extends, that instead of searching for other parallel declarations, it will be sufficient that we examine into the truth and meaning of these. They to whom the Apostle addressed himself, were well convinced of the corruption of the Gentiles: but they were apt to consider themselves as another species of men. They boasted of their *freedom* as the children of Abraham, and had no notion of that natural bondage of sin, from which the Son was to *make them free.* Therefore the Apostle argues with respect to them, that as all these things were written in *the law*, they were spoken to those who were *under the law*, even to the elect children of Abraham, who thought themselves excepted from the rest of mankind, *that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might become guilty before God.* A sense of self-sufficiency, native dignity, and independence, was the ruin of Lucifer: and if there were any thing of natural purity in man, he might be boasting of it, and setting up for merit in oppostion to his Creator. But under the present constitution of things, all men are guilty, and every mouth is stopped: that is, every mouth is stopped in reason, though not a fact. They, who know themselves, will be silent; but many mouths of the ignorant are still

still open; and they will continue so, till the great day of inquisition, when the mouth of all iniquity shall be as effectually stopped, as it is now confuted. And what do we lose by this conviction? Nothing, but the gratification of pride, a base principle; a lust as hurtful to the spirit, as the foulest appetites are to the body. In every other respect we are gainers. We are still in the hands of a merciful Being, whom we may safely leave to make his own terms with us, and who humbles us for no end, but that we may be the more effectually exalted.

But let us now attend to the Apostle's description; the particulars of which arrange themselves under three distinct heads: and relate, first, to the *thoughts* of men; secondly, to their *words*; and thirdly, to their *works*. The subject opens with these words—*There is none righteous, no not one.* The chief thing here to be observed, is the universality of the corruption asserted. Jews and Gentiles are condemned without the exception of any individual: and this general application of the words, on which the Apostle so much insists, will teach us how the first verse of the 14th psalm is to be understood, as I shall take occasion to remark in another place. The word *righteous* is a term proper to a court of justice. The law says,

says, *If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the* righteous, *and condemn the wicked.* Therefore to be righteous, is to be clear of the offence of which any one is accused. But no man ever was or ever will be qualified by nature to abide such a trial in the sight of God. The law, which should direct him to perfection, serves only to expose his guilt; and hence the Apostle calls the law, the *strength of sin;* the instrument by which sin prevails against man, to convict him of unrighteousness. If this be true, how is it that the Scripture speaks of so many righteous men, and particularly of the righteousness of Abraham? The answer is obvious enough, that the righteousness ascribed to the servants of God, is a *righteousness without the law,* even the obedience of *faith, accounted for righteousness.* And this commutation (if I may so call it) is a proof, that righteousness is not inherent; that man of himself is an olive *wild by nature,* and consequently fruitless; a *branch which cannot bear fruit of itself* And where are we to look for the origin of this evil, but in the stock from whence all men are derived? It was as impossible for Adam to beget an uncorrupt offspring when he became a sin-

a sinner, as for him to have begotten an angel while he was innocent. This doctrine was preserved by tradition in the earliest ages; and the world hath always been so full of its effects, and hath carried such striking marks of it, that it would have been marvellous indeed, if it had any where been totally forgotten. *Job* asks, with respect to the birth of man, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*?* And the friends of Job were full of the same sentiments. One of them saith, *what is man, that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous†?* Another of them asks nearly in the same terms, *how then can man be justified with God: or how can he be clean that is born of a woman‖?* This carries the unrighteousness of man up to his birth: but the psalmist carries it still farther, even to his conception: *behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me§.* The universality of death, as a penalty upon the posterity of Adam, is a demonstration of the universality of sin: for God is neither so unmindful of his works, as to permit them to be destroyed by accident; nor yet so unjust, as to inflict the punishment of sin, where sin itself is not

* Chap. xiv. 4. † Chap. xv. 4. ‖ Chap. xxv. 4.
§ Psalm li. 5.

not to be found. *Death passed upon all men,* saith the Apostle, *for that all have sinned.* If all are punished, all are guilty: and thus it appears from the constitution of nature, that *there is none righteous, no not one.*

If we now enquire, what are the effects of human depravity, and wherein this unrighteousness actually consists, the Apostle proceeds to inform us, *there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.* Unrighteousness is the unavoidable consequence of ignorance; for no man can go farther in his practice than his *understanding* and knowledge will carry him. Where no wheat has been sown, none is produced: but weeds are blown about with every wind; and the matter of the earth, wherever it is turned up, shews itself to be already impregnated with their seeds. The understanding here signified is not the knowledge of arts and sciences, in which men, with the advantages of education and exercise, may excel by their natural talents; but that better *understanding*, by which we know God and depart from evil *. This no man hath naturally; *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart*

* *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the* Lord, *that is* wisdom, *and to depart from evil is* understanding. Job. xxviii. 28.

*heart is only evil continually**. It is imputed to this depravity of thought, that the *wickedness of man* was so *great* before the flood; not of this or that man in particular, but *of man*, of the species. What else could produce such universal corruption of manners? But it may still be objected, all this was spoken of the antediluvian race of men. It was so; but *what then? are we better than they? No, in no wise.* And the scripture assures us, the day of judgment shall find the world of unbelievers just such men as they were in the days of Noah. It does not appear, that the *understanding* of man ever discovered the *true God;* but on the contrary, that when it was set on work, it was apt to extinguish that knowledge of him which is handed down by *tradition*†. The world, instead of knowing God by their *wisdom*, reasoned themselves backward from that knowledge to idolatry‡.

When the Hebrews apostatized and fell into the ways of the heathen, God told them by his prophet, that they *made them idols according to their own understanding* ‖: and it is remarked

* Gen. vi. 5.

† Αρχαιος μεν ουν τις λογος, και πατριος εστι πασιν ανθρωποις, ὡς ἐν Θεου τα παντα, και δια Θεου ἡμιν συνεστηκεν. Arist. de Mundo.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 21. ‖ Hos. xiii. 2.

of the heathens in general, that by *professing themselves to be wise*, that is, by reasoning on such principles as were borrowed from the fund of their own imagination, *they became fools*; and *changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, &c.*— That strange propensity to idolatry, which prevailed among all nations of the world, and which no man really wise can reflect upon without confusion and astonishment, would incline us to believe, there was something of the nature of that crime in the first transgression in Paradise; which brought with it an infatuation upon the children of Adam, inclining them to prefer any false object to the Creator of the world. A charge is grounded on this fatal error, which is urged with great severity by the prophet *Jeremiah*, and extended to the nature of men in general. *Learn not*, says he to the House of Israel, *the way of the heathen* *: *O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might: all the wise men of the nations are altogether brutish and foolish—the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish.—Every man is brutish in his knowledge.—They* (the gods of the Gentiles) *are vanity and a work of errors—the portion of Jacob*

is

* Jer. chap. x.

is not like them, for he is the FORMER OF ALL THINGS—*the Lord of Hosts is his name.—O Lord, I know that the* WAY OF MAN *is not in himself.* That the Gentiles preferred the creature to the Creator, is a fact so notorious, that we cannot but assent to the prophet's doctrine, and conclude, that the knowledge of *God's Being* is not natural to the mind of man; much less of his divine *will* and holy *law*. God, who knows the extent of our understanding, hath never required us to invent true religion, but only to receive it, and to preserve it when delivered; so that great allowances have been made for those who had no opportunities of information. When the votaries of *Jupiter* and *Mercury* were exhorted by St. *Paul* to turn from *those vanities to the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein**; the Apostle added upon this occasion, that God *in times past had suffered all nations to walk in their own way*. This was the *way* of idolatry; a way common to *all nations*; and which would have been followed even by the children of Abraham, unless the father had been called away from his kindred to walk before God in a state of separation from the world of idolaters. On another like occasion, when the

* Acts xiv. 15.

Apostle preached against the heathenish superstition at Athens, he told them also, that God had *winked* at their idolatry, as a practice which had prevailed in the times of their *ignorance* *. This was a mortifying apology, when offered in behalf of men who had established a public mart of science, and valued themselves highly upon their intellectual attainments. But the case was rather worse with them than with the illiterate. Being able to multiply words by the rule of art, when they had no real knowledge of things at the bottom; and to defend and disguise their folly with the ornaments of wisdom, they were the more unlikely to forsake it: and accordingly, the Apostle had little or no success among them. All they had in view was to turn his sublime doctrine into a matter of debate, as they did every thing else; so *Paul departed from among them*, leaving them to the vain janglings of their own philosophy.

If it should still be made a question, after what hath been said, whether the prevailing of idolatry over the nations of the world ought to be imputed to a mistake propagated by evil communication, or to an error breeding in the mind; I think the difference in the present case is not very material. If men agreed so universally

* Acts xvii. 30.

universally in corrupting the first article of religion; if every breath carried the infection, and every heart so easily received it, the dishonour is rather extenuated than aggravated, by supposing the seeds of the distemper to be latent in the constitution. That the Gentiles before the preaching of the gospel were alienated from the life of God *through the* IGNORANCE *that was in them**, and that the Jews were perpetually falling into the like apostasy, even against the remonstrances of their better knowledge, is a fact sufficient to explain and justify this part of our subject.

But the ignorance of the mind is farther aggravated and confirmed by its *inattention—there is none that seeketh after God.* The affections of man are engaged by other things: *he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth.* Honour, wealth, and pleasure are the objects

* Eph. iv. 18. Here I would refer my reader to the Works of Mr. *Leland*, vol. I. p. 406. *On the Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation;* wherein he shews, that the representations of the deplorable state of the Gentiles, made to us in the scripture, are literally true, and agreeable to fact; and are confirmed by the undoubted monuments of Paganism. And also that the attempts of some moderns to explain away those representations are vain and insufficient. The design of the work is good; and it is executed with learning and perspicuity.

all his attention: they furnish him with the matter of his conversation, and his thoughts are so completely filled with the means of obtaining them, that the great subjects of the other world are excluded. Tell him of any thing that concerns him as a man of this world, and he is at leisure to hear you; but if you speak of what is infinitely more important, and concerns him more nearly, you find him pre-engaged. When St. *Paul* discoursed to the wise men of *Athens*, on the living God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment; how indifferent did these great things appear to them, and with what coldness were they received!— Well might the prophet say, that when God should be made known to the heathens, he should be *found of them* that *sought him not*.— Had they been seeking after the Creator, and in love with truth, they would have rejoiced at the sight of such a messenger, who was capable of giving them all the satisfaction they could desire: but instead of this, some mocked, others accused him as a *setter forth of strange gods*; some despised him as a *babbler*, others said, they would *hear him again* at another time. So true is it, that the *natural man*, or man as he is in himself without the aid of divine grace, *receiveth*

ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. His wisdom, like himself, is earthly; and wherever it prevails, the wisdom of God is either tasteless or disagreeable. The wise men of *Athens* were no worse than other wise men of this world: the same carnal mind which possessed them, whether it be in the Jew or the Greek, in the ancient or the modern, will always be productive of the like stupidity.

Ignorance of God, and disaffection to the things of heaven, so manifest in all men while they are in a state of nature, are strong proofs of our original corruption; to which the Apostle adds that strange propensity to error in opinion, which led mankind into the abominable errors of idolatry. These seem to have been chiefly alluded to, in the words which follow in the order of his description of human nature—*they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.* The sense of this hath partly been considered before; for though the words may signify indefinitely any departure from the way of truth and holiness, yet we hear not of any species of apostasy which became general, except that of idolatry; concerning which, much hath occurred to us already. Yet I have

some further observations to make upon it. If we look back for the beginning of this crime of *going out of the way*, we shall find that it happened in Paradise; where God by immediate revelation taught a right way to Adam, and called it the *way of the tree of life;* a way which would have guided him to the perfection of his nature in the enjoyment of God, the source of life and felicity. But from this way he turned aside, when he applied to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for wisdom and exaltation independent of his Creator. His posterity have been engaged in a search equally fruitless and dangerous, as often as they have consulted their own will and followed their own way; *seeking death in the error of their life*;* not by design, for death cannot be an object of choice, but by necessary consequence, through blindness and disaffection. For the prophet hath informed us, that *the way of man is not in himself:* when he hath lost that way into which he was directed by the Author of his being, his own sagacity never can bring him back to it again; but the farther he proceeds, the greater is his deviation. The wise man tells us, *there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

* Wisd. i. 12.

*death**. How miserable is this, that the way which leads to death should seem to be a right one! But such is the fact: every way which leads from the true God and the true religion must terminate in death, notwithstanding all the fine things that may be said in commendation of it. The experiment has been made on various occasions, and always with the same success. The Serpent recommended a way, as better than that which God had revealed; but it proved to be a way of death, and all the children of Adam are witnesses of the issue.—When the generation of men before the flood departed from God, or, as the Scripture itself expresses it, when *all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth*†, death and destruction soon ensued; every thing that was in the earth died; except those few who escaped by virtue of the divine covenant of mercy. When God brought a people out of Egypt for his service, they *turned aside out of the way which he commanded them*‡, and some met death immediately from the sword, others more remotely, at the end of their wanderings in the wilderness. Having turned aside from the right way of faith and obedience, they were punished by being made to *wander out of the way*; and even to die in this

* Prov. xiv. 12. † Gen. vi. 12, 17. ‡ Exod. xxxii. 8.

this state of deviation, without the enjoyment of the promised land: which happened to them in a figure, as an example to others, who *through an evil heart of unbelief should depart from the living God**.

When men have begun to *think*, independently on God's will, and to follow the suggestions of their own hearts, they have never failed to turn aside from the way of life into the ways of death. Therefore it occurs next in the Apostle's description, that *they are together become unprofitable*: for, to use his own language, what *fruit* can there be in those things, the *end of which is death?* They who depart from God are unprofitable to themselves, and to him who created them. They can reap no possible benefit from their own destruction: and if the most perfect of the servants of God are to look upon themselves as unprofitable on the score of merit, after all their endeavours, the ungodly, who have apostatized of malice, must be of that other species of unprofitable servants, who are to be cast into outer darkness. The word *unprofitable*, if more strictly rendered according to the original in the 14th Psalm, is *putrid*, *filthy*, or *stinking:* the meaning of which is this, that man by the present sinfulness

* Heb. iii. 12.

ness of his nature is become offensive to God, as a dead carcase, or a body full of sores: in allusion to which, the Psalmist saith in another place, *my wounds stink* (meaning the wounds of sin) *and are corrupt through my foolishness:* but when this quality of sin is purged away, and a subsequent purification takes place by virtue of an accepted sacrifice or burnt offering, then the Lord is said to *smell a sweet savour;* as at the offering of a sacrifice by Noah, after the world had perished in its corruption.

We have now considered the depravity of human nature, as it shews itself in the thoughts or counsels of men, with respect to God and his religion. It is asserted moreover, that *there is none that doeth good, no not one:* and this is proved by a particular introduction of their words and their works. First of their words—*their throat is an open sepulchre.* If the *inward man* is dead by nature, as the Scripture teaches us, then the outer may be considered as the structure of a sepulchre, whose *inside is filled with dead men's bones, and all uncleanness.* When we remove the covering of a sepulchre, there comes forth from it an offensive odour of death: and if we would know what is in the heart of man, he must discover it to us by his words; which are of such a sort

a sort as to betray and publish the corruption of his mind. When he opens his mouth, he opens a grave, and the disagreeable savour of his unsound speech shews that there is a dead corpse at the bottom. But it seems as if there were something farther to be understood: their throat is not only a sepulchre, but an *open sepulchre*. Men of impure thoughts have not the modesty to keep their mouths shut, but they glory in their shame. When their minds are given up to folly, they cannot be satisfied till they have made it public. The more unsound their discourse is in its quality, you have so much the more of it in quantity: and if we observe the world throughout, few people have more to say than common swearers, slanderers, blasphemers, and reprobates.

For the iniquity of their words, men are also compared to serpents—*with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips*. When interest and worldly affection dictate to the tongues of men, they are double and deceitful, and are aptly represented by the forked or double tongue of the serpent; for if it serves their purpose, they make no scruple of telling two different stories about the same thing. But the words of the slanderer are worse than those of the common lyar: they wound

wound and infect at the same time, like the venomous asp, whose bite is incurable.

Many a fair character of an innocent person hath been ruined, and the comfort of his life irrecoverably destroyed, by the bite of calumny and detraction; so that the bite of an asp would have been preferred as the less hurtful of the two: yet how common is the practice; and what an insipid life would many talkative people lead, if their conversation were to be purged of slander! It is observed by St. *James*, that *the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison**: but certainly that poison was no part of man's original constitution, when he was pure and upright, as he came from the hands of his Creator: it was derived from that father of lies, who infused into our first parents a poison, which hath run in the blood of their posterity ever since. Soon after they are born they shew the effects of it: for the first use they generally make of their speech is to lie; and if they are permitted, either through wilful folly or neglect, to follow their natural disposition, deceit will be their practice to the end of their lives. So strong is the propensity to *lying*, that all children have need to be warned and instructed against this evil. Many are cured by

* Jam. iii. 8.

using the tremendous name of God in common discourse, that they are unable to deliver any insignificant narrative without inserting an oath or a curse between every two or three words of it; where it is so far from adding any thing to the sense, or heightning the wit, that it breaks the connexion, and turns their discourse into nonsense. What possible reasons can be assigned for this absurd practice, or how can we describe it, but in those severe words of the Apostle—*the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness?* For such conversation is neither rational, nor pleasant, nor profitable. The best and the worst we can say for it, is this of the Scripture, that it is *constitutional.*

So much for the *words* of men. We come now to their *works—their feet are swift to shed blood.* This is spoken with allusion to beasts of prey, whose swiftness of foot is given them for purposes of murder and bloodshed; that they may overtake and devour those harmless creatures, which have no strength to resist, nor speed to escape them. Here I am almost confounded with my subject; and could willingly drop the prosecution of it; for this seems to be an hard saying: yet if we have patience to examine into the fact, I fear that the experi-

ence

ence of all countries and of all ages hath shewn, that this part of the human character is as natural as the rest. And this age has not been wanting in examples of cruelty and blood shedding, with a degree of wantonness and wickedness never heard of before in the world: as the history of what had lately passed in France must abundantly testify. But whence do these things come, but from the nature of man, of which thirst of blood seems to be a natural appetite? For the first man, who followed nature after its corruption, was a murderer. *Cain* slew his brother on the diabolical principle of envy; because his works were more righteous than his own. Infidelity, whether in Jews or Heathens, hath always acted the same part. Let any person consider the treatment of the prophets and messengers of God, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the ten dreadful persecutions of the christian Church, and the persecution of Christians by one another since the age of the Reformation, and then let him judge, whether the *feet* of men are *swift to shed blood;* especially the blood of the innocent? But all this it may be said was the effect of superstition, which hath always been bloody minded: be it so: yet it is equally to be lamented, that so baneful a weed should

thrive

thrive so naturally in the human heart. However, let superstition be out of the question, and we shall discover another principle, equally pernicious and more irrational; even the principle of *honour*, as it is called. This directs men to commit homicide upon the slightest provocation; coolly, deliberately and soberly: according to rules received, approved, established: from which no man in a certain rank of life must depart, but at the hazard of his character, and all that is most valuable. If this is the principle of those who call themselves *the world*, then the world by its own confession is guilty of the charge which the Apostle hath brought against them. They are not only ready to shed blood, but *swift* to do it; the most trifling cause, a word, a phantom, a shadow (even the honour of those who have no honour) will provoke them to it: their passions will be excited to a blood-thirstiness superior to that of the lion or the tyger: For these beasts, as we are told, will rather seize a brute than a man, if they have the choice of both: but this false *honour*, like a dæmon that delights in unnatural sacrifices, is satisfied with nothing less than *human blood.*

If men are subject to the influence of such principles, we shall not wonder at what is said

of them in the next place—*destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known.* Deceit and envy, wrath and hatred, ambition and concupiscence, with nothing to restrain them but worldly policy, which more frequently sets them all in motion, must needs have made wild work, and produced *destruction* and *misery* in every age. What is the civil history of man, but a register of the various operations of these pernicious principles? If we look back, and survey any particular people in their state of barbarism, we find them perpetually at war with one another; dividing themselves into a multitude of little independent principalities, with separate interests; defrauding and plundering one another; subsisting rather by rapine and the sword, than by the profitable and peaceable arts of tillage *. Such

* In Gallia non solum in omnibus civitatibus atque pagis partibusque, sed pene etiam in singulis domibus factiones sunt. *Cæs. de Bell. Gall.* Lib. 6. § 10.

Aliquod bellum fere quotannis accidere solebat, uti aut ipsi injurias inferrent, aut illatas propulsarent. *Ibid.* § 14.

Civitatibus maxima laus est, quam latissimas circum se vastatis finibus solitudines habere. Hoc proprium virtutis existimant, expulsos agris finitimos cedere, neque quenquam prope se audere consistere. Simul hoc se fore tutiores arbitrantur, repentino incursionis timore sublato. Ibid. § 22.

Such were the people whom *Julius Cæsar* found in *Britain*, fencing and intrenching themselves in their habitations, that they might be secure from robbery and murder *. And if we take another view of men, as they approach to a state of civilization, there we find pride prevailing as the universal passion which sets the world on fire. We see the bastard governments of *Greece* and *Rome*, in which there was an eternal struggle for liberty, a balancing of factions, a perpetual searching for that philosopher's stone in politics, a state of such a form, that all might govern, and none be governed: But it could never be found: yet they, who knew not the way of peace, were weak enough to keep this always in view, as the first and greatest object to men in society; and hence the state was beaten to pieces between the contentions of the upper and lower orders, like a vessel upon a sea where the wind and tide are contrary to each other.

* Oppidum autem Britanni vocant, quum silvas impeditas vallo atque fossâ munierunt, quo, incursionis hostium vitandæ causâ, convenire consueverunt. *Ibid.* Lib. v. § 21.

The natives of America, (I mean the native Indians, who are still in that state in which the Europeans found them,) spend their time in war and hunting.

We are now arrived at the concluding article of the human character—*There is no fear of God before their eyes.* They persist in a course of sin and error without remorse; as if there were no God to survey the actions of men now, and to require an account of them hereafter. At the end of all their ungodliness, the *terrors of the Lord* are planted, but they look not upon them: they hasten as a bird into an hidden snare, and know not that it is for their lives. The wrath of God hath often been revealed from heaven, and fearful punishments have been inflicted upon ungodly people; yet the impression wears away: the Author of such visitations is forgotten; the causes of them are misrepresented by the application of some false philosophy: and so the sinner renders them of no effect to his soul. Every man who opposes the divine Will, is in the situation of the perverse *Balaam;* the Angel of the Lord stands in the way before him with a drawn sword, ready to cut him in sunder; but his eyes are holden by a spirit of unbelief, and he has no sense of his danger. Instead of turning back from the wrong path, his heart is fixed only on the gratification of his present desires; and if he is arrived at the last stage of wickedness, then his conscience will afford no

aid

aid when it warns him of the vengeance that awaits him; but will be beaten in a paroxysm of fury, and spurred up against the face of judgment.

Such is the condition of the *natural man* in consequence of the fall; these are the defects and miseries of his character. No sort of crime hath here been represented, to which he is not subject, as the lusts of his own heart, inflamed and assisted by the temptations of the Devil, draw away and entice him. But it doth not follow from hence, that every sensual man must be guilty of every possible crime, only because it is the fruit of his nature: this is no necessary consequence. For *death* is also the fruit of our nature; yet all men do not die of the same distemper; neither did any man ever die of all distempers at once; though some cases of mortality, like some instances of guilt, are exceedingly complicated. In different persons sin and mortality have various appearances, according to the difference of constitutions, circumstances, and accidents. On the whole it appears, that as man is by nature mortal, he is by nature sinful. His mortality is known and allowed by all, and no man ever dreamed of denying it. His sinfulness is as real, though the subject is not so popular. In this respect the prince and

the beggar, the learned and the ignorant, are all upon a level. Let the most splendid pedigree be carried far enough backward, and it comes at last to Adam and Eve, who are the common parents of all men, and who have delivered the same nature to all their posterity.

AN

ESSAY ON MAN.

CHAPTER II.

The Redemption of Man from Sin by the Sufferings of Christ on the Cross.

ALL that has been said in the foregoing chapter will be confirmed, from a consideration of man's redemption by the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross. That the genuine fruits of man's nature are such as we have recounted, and that St. *Paul*, in the passages collected from the Old Testament, hath given a true representation of them, is not only proved by experience and observation, but is also clear from hence; in that they are the sins for which Christ suffered, that our nature might be redeemed, and the justice of God satisfied. His sufferings were of such a sort, and were so ordained by the providence of God, as to carry in them

all the marks of that sinfulness of man's nature which gave occasion to them.

Thus, for that want of understanding which is in the mind of man, HIS mind was filled with sorrow and dejection: his head was pierced with thorns, for the wickedness and vanity of our imaginations. Because we had departed from the right way, and had turned from our dependence upon God; God in the hour of his distress departed from Him, withdrawing that divine comfort, which had supported him under the bodily trials of the cross. For our pride and aspiring to be above what God had made us, He left that glory which was natural to him, and condescended to assume the lowest character upon earth; he was mocked at and insulted as a pretended king, rejected as an alien, despised as an outcast, and numbered with condemned malefactors. He was stripped naked at the time of his sufferings, that he might take upon himself the shame of Adam's guilt: He was executed on a cross of wood, which is called the *Tree** of his Cross, to remind us of that fatal tree, which brought sin and death into the world: he was tried with an agony in a garden, and was at last buried in a garden: to shew that his death proceeded

* Gal. iii. 13—1 Pet. ii. 24.

proceeded from the offence of man in Paradise. Because our *mouth is filled with cursing and bitterness*, his mouth was filled with vinegar and bitter gall, at a time when they were most distasteful, while he was fainting under the weight of his sorrows and sufferings. Our hands having been used as the instruments of sin, his hands were pierced with nails: his feet were torn and wounded, and fixed through to the cross, as if, like our feet, they had been *swift to shed blood.* Thus was the iniquity of us all laid on him, according to the strictest law of retaliation: the justice of God inflicted punishment upon him, where sin had manifested itself in us; and this, I presume, in more respects than we are able to shew. The image of the first Adam, with all its depravity, was crucified in him, and as the Apostle rightly instructs us, the *body of sin*, from head to foot, *was destroyed**. There is such a correspondence between the ways of God and the doctrine of the scripture, that they mutually illustrate and confirm one another. When Christ suffered for the sins of the world, he suffered in such a sort, as to shew, that he took upon himself the character of a natural man; and therefore the natural man really is *such in himself*

* Rom. vi. 6.

self as the Redeemer *appeared to be* for his sake. None but fools will deny this; and no wise man can hear of it, without praying to God, that he would deliver us from this *body of sin;* that is, from ourselves; that we being new creatures, may serve him in newness of life to his glory and our own salvation.

AN

ESSAY ON MAN.

CHAPTER III.

The New Creature in Christianity.

IN the course of my enquiry, my first endeavour was to make it appear, that man is by nature *unrighteous;* and, after the example and method of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, I have pointed out all those particulars in which this unrighteousness is found to consist. This account has been confirmed, by its correspondence with the sufferings of Christ on the cross; whose afflictions and death were of such a form, as to refer us back to the sinfulness of the nature for which he suffered. And now in the last place, to clear this matter as far as possible, it may be shewn, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a system, accommodated, in all its parts, to *this* unrigh-

unrighteousness of *human nature;* and applying itself professedly to all those evils which have been described and insisted upon in the foregoing chapters. The Christian religion, in every step it takes for the salvation of man, presupposes the *fall* of Adam, and the permanent *effects* of it in all his posterity. Medicines are accommodated to the nature of the diseases which they are designed to cure; so that from the medicines themselves, if prescribed by a skilful person, and according to the rules of his art, the symptoms of the disease may be inferred. Thus much, however, is always certain, that when a *medicine* is *provided*, a *distemper* is *supposed;* and that he who stands in need of a *cure*, can be no other than a *sick man*. All the several alteratives and restoratives which the gospel has provided, serve to convince us, in the first place, that we are sick by nature: upon any other supposition the gospel is an absurdity; as undertaking to do that for all men, of which no man hath any need. Therefore, if the gospel is a consistent scheme, the remedies therein offered demonstrate, that the *soul* of man is in a state of sin and blindness; as plainly as medicinal drugs and instruments of surgery shew that his *body* is frail and mortal.

These

These remedies, with their properties and applications, are the things we are now to consider; and a slight examination will make it evident, that they are all adapted to the evils of man's constitution, as described by the Apostle, and consequently for the producing of a new creature.

It was first asserted in this description, that *there is none righteous;* which assertion is the same for substance with what the holy psalmist had said in his supplication—*Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified**. To obviate this, the gospel, in opposition to the *ministration of condemnation* by the law of Moses, is called the *ministration of righteousness*†; bringing us to that justification in the sight of God, to which no man living can restore himself. It brings about this change, by admitting us to be members of Christ, who is called the *Lord our Righteousness:* that instead of being considered as we are in ourselves, we may be *accepted in the beloved,* who is the *first-born among many brethren.* So that the Apostle asks, and teaches us to triumph in the same question—*who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?*

It

* Psalm cxliii. 2. † 2 Cor. iii. 9.

It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again: who died to make satisfaction for the sins of the world, and rose again to shew that it was accepted: so that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* As surely as many, according to the state of nature, *were made sinners by one man's disobedience;* so surely also *by the obedience of one are many made righteous.* Thus abundantly is the evil of *unrighteousness* provided against.

The next thing in order is the renovation of the *understanding.* Of the *old man* it was said, *there is none that understandeth;* but the new man is said to be *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**.— When God changes us from natural into spiritual men, he restores the spiritual powers of discernment, which we lost by the fall; and in which the image of God consisted. As the sight of the mind is now dark by nature, God is said to *enlighten the eyes of the understanding*†: and as the eyes are shut to spiritual things, Christ is therefore said to have *opened the understanding* of his disciples, that they might *understand the scriptures.* The psalmist speaks as one sensible of this defect—*Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of*

* Col. iii. 10. † Eph. i. 18.

of thy law: whence it follows, that a man, whom God hath enlightened, sees some things in the scripture, of which that man can have no understanding, who views it with the eyes of *nature.* Sometimes this principle is called *faith;* which is a divine sense superinduced to the senses of nature: it signifies a right apprehension of God, a love of his wisdom, a trust in his promises, and an expectation of the world to come. This principle is the gift of God; and they who are blessed with it are of one mind; but they who have it not are always jarring and disputing about the plainest things, and will be so to the world's end.

But God doth not only renew the mind, and restore the right use of the understanding: he also supplies true matter to it. He reveals to us the knowledge of himself, the true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier of Men. "*The Son of God hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true:*" therefore till he gives us this understanding, we have no knowledge of any proper object of adoration. Besides the true notion of God's Being, the bible opens to us the ways of his providence in the government of the world, and the wonders of redemption in the salvation of

his

his Church by Jesus Christ, *in whom are h*
the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

But still there is no right understanding
out a proper rule of action: therefore we
such a rule offered to us in the command
of the law, and in the precepts of the gosp
which all the colours of vice and virtue ar
perly distinguished; so that the Christ
delivered from that miserable folly, to whi
the world is subject, of confounding goo
evil, and putting one for the other. On
considerations, we may subscribe to the
vine words of Solomon—*The Lord giveth*
dom; out of his mouth cometh knowledg
understanding. He layeth up sound wisdo
the righteous; he is a buckler to them tha
uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judg
and preserveth the way of his saints.
shalt thou understand righteousness, and
ment, and equity; yea every good path.*

This leads us to the next article, the
of our way. All men are *out of their way*
the gospel undertakes to put them into
ey are represented as wandering in a
s wilderness, such as this world is to all
who are not under the direction of God;
this wilderness, he that led the Israelites

* Prov. ii. 6, &c.

Egypt makes a path so plain and direct, that the *wayfaring men, though fools,* (though never so simple in the estimation of the world,) *cannot err therein.* So far as we have followed the dictates of nature, we have erred and strayed from that right way, which leads to God, and the happiness of his kingdom; in which capacity we are compared to *lost sheep,* whom Christ came to *seek* and *save.* Such as are willing to be found, are conducted by him to the Father; and he himself becomes a new and living *way* to them, by means of the doctrine which he taught; by his death, which opened to them the kingdom of heaven; by his life, which serves as an example to direct them thither, and by his Spirit leading and supporting them; so that if this way be kept in view, they cannot fail of attaining their end, even the salvation of their souls.

Then again, instead of that *unsound speech,* which is the effusion of the natural man, the gospel dictates a new sort of speech, agreeable to the doctrines of grace, and *seasoned* with *salt,* to preserve it from *corruption.* When a man is reformed from that hateful condition of the *open sepulchre,* no *filthy communication* proceeds out of his mouth; but such only as *becometh a saint,* and may *minister grace to the hearers.* If the man himself is holy, his speech

will be holy; it will agree with the purity of that doctrine which is laid up in his heart. He is no longer a *sepulchre*, defiled with death; but an earthen vessel, inclosing the inestimable treasure of divine grace: a lamp, instead of a grave; sending forth the odours of incense in his prayers; which the angels of heaven will present before the throne of God. His tongue is cleared of its native poison, and instead of spreading discord, becomes an instrument of peace: all cursing, and bitterness, and malice is put away from him; he blesseth, *and curseth not.*

That blood-thirstiness of wild beasts, which is common to the men of this world (not excepting those whom courtesy calls *gentle*), is no longer found in the true Christian. His *feet*, instead of being *swift to shed blood*, are *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* He is taught, that it is far more honourable in the sight of God to forgive injury, than to revenge it. True [illegible] of mind is necessary [illegible] low qualities (to spe[illegible] for th[illegible]less [illegible]s he [illegible]ccusto[illegible]he sigh

God, will grow indifferent to the censure and praises of men.

The unmortified passions of mankind fill the world with *destruction and misery;* the proper work of those who are governed by them, is to destroy others and to disquiet themselves. But how different a state of things would begin to shew itself, if the generality of men in civil society were influenced by the spirit of christianity! —For this inspires a love of justice and mercy; it delights in protecting and saving; it humbles itself, to exalt others; and having the best claim to the blessing of God, it is prospered in its undertakings, receives present enjoyment in this world, and is happy in the expectation of a better. As the empire of sin and death increases, misery never fails to keep equal pace with it. What is it but the prosecution of vain desires, and the clashing of interests and appetites, which creates all the misery men inflict upon one another? How ready are they to complain of the world as a scene of trouble: and what makes it such, but the abuse of it, by [illegible] who neither fear God nor know themselves? Let but the rules of the gospel take [illegible] and the world would soon be a very [illegible] place: but (as many are called, and [illegible]hosen,) individuals only can experience the [illegible] and freedom of christian principles; and

only from him; and, therefore, he bequeathed it as a legacy to his disciples *.

The last defect to which the gospel applies itself, is that unhappy absence of the *fear of God*, for want of which unbelievers are insensible of their danger. But with us the case is altered: our eyes are opened to see and to avoid those *terrors*, which are the certain rewards of disobedience. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; and who that knows this can persevere in a state of sin? The expectation of future judgment, and a sense of the Divine presence, are necessary to form the conscience of a Christian; for without these, men have no conscience at all. The holy scripture teaches us to *set the Lord always before us*, in every thing we do, or speak, or think; to be sensible, that the eyes of our future Judge are now upon us, every moment observing the motions of our minds, and noting our most secret actions.—This persuasion is our best security; it will keep us from turning aside to the paths of vice; and, by stirring us up to vigilance and severity toward our own conduct, will be the means of delivering us, through the all-sufficient merits of Christ, from that indignation and wrath,

* John xiv. 27.

of sight, when we attempt to justify the christian scheme, or undertake to explain any christian doctrines. The bible begins with it professedly; pointing out the wiles of the devil, and bringing in the Saviour for no other end but to counterwork the destroyer in his two great works of *sin* and *death*. They who remain in the state in which the fall left them, are called his children; and it is their pleasure to propagate that sin and death which their father introduced. As he was a liar from the beginning, so they are liars, against God as well as man; he was a murderer, and they are murderers; he was a tempter, a deceiver, a subtle serpent, a devouring lion; and their works, like his, abound with deceit, enmity, subtlety, avarice, and rapacity. There have been two opposite parties from the beginning, the *sons of God*, and the *seed of the serpent*. Their opinions are contrary, and their works contrary. Christianity is at the head of one party, and Infidelity at the head of the other. As time is divided between light and darkness, so is the world divided between these two. The dispute between them has subsisted through all ages past, it is now in agitation, and it grows hotter every day; it will never cease, till the consummation, when the

Judge of men and angels shall interpose to decide it.

To this true state of things the gospel is adapted: the religion proper for man must be built upon the history of man; as the best account of natural causes must be drawn from the history of nature; all the rest is but sophistry and delusion. The clergy especially, who are so often called upon to heal the distempers of the soul, should be well acquainted with its history and constitution; and the science is as requisite to them, as the anatomy of the human frame is to a common physician.

And now, if the fall of man is really the leading fact, to which our faith is adapted; what a preposterous, unnatural, useless, dangerous system of religion must that be, which either omits, or denies it! The scheme of Deism, which calls itself *Natural Religion*, is this very system. For the fall of man is a fact, which (though reason and experience may easily justify it when known) uninformed reason cannot find out; therefore the religion of nature takes no notice of it, but proceeds as if man were now in the state in which the Creator left him. *Corruption* and *renovation* are the two articles which run through every branch

branch of our faith; but natural religion has neither of these. The salvation of man is the result of the triumph of Jesus Christ over Satan: natural religion knows nothing of either party. Our whole life here upon earth is a struggle against temptation from the powers of darkness, under which the grace of God only is able to support us; but natural religion says not one word either of grace or temptation. So that upon the whole, if there is a doctrine among Christians, which can render their whole creed ineffectual and impertinent, it is this, that *religion* (properly so called) is *natural* to man: from which the inferences are obvious, that nature has been encroaching upon religion, and undermining civil society, ever since its claims were set on foot by some speculating divines, and taken up, on their authority, by the Deists. How we shall get back again from nature to Christianity, God Almighty knows! The progress is *up* hill, and therefore difficult and doubtful. The case of the Heathens at the propagation of Christianity was not nearly so bad as that of Christians, relapsed, by this road, into infidelity. *They* saw and confessed, that nature had carried them into error and misery: that they were become fools by pretending to be wise:

and

and so they were glad to take a better guide. But when men have taken the blind guide as the best of all, and think they can see every thing by their own light; they will go on in their own way till it is too late to turn back. All we can do, with hope of success, is to warn others not to follow them.

The clergy of this church are admonished by the canons, to preach against Popery four times in a year; but if they were now to preach *forty* times in a year against this modern religion of nature, it might be more to the purpose.

Moralists, then, may boast of their dignity as they please: our religion is made for men who have *lost their dignity;* and it will succeed only upon those, who *glory in their infirmities,* and determine to *know nothing but Christ crucified.* He who sets up his dignity, independent of revelation and divine grace, hath forgotten that he was *baptized;* and hath invented a new gospel, as subversive of the old, as the vain traditio[illegible] the Scribes and Pharisees were subversi[illegible]e Mosaic Law. The wise men of this[illegible]s they think a[illegible] call themselves) err[illegible]pon this s[illegible] giving us represen[illegible]huma[illegible] much differing

pastoral, with all the artificial ornaments of poetry, differs from the ignorance and rusticity of real, life. In this our modern reasoners are condemned by the Heathens, who have left us true and striking descriptions of human corruption. They never pretended that their *religion* was *natural:* their gods were *traditional;* they were the *gods of their fathers;* they signified the different powers of the created world; and their whole ritual was a system of *expiation by sacrifice,* such as natural religion never owned nor thought of. Let scholars consider this fact*.

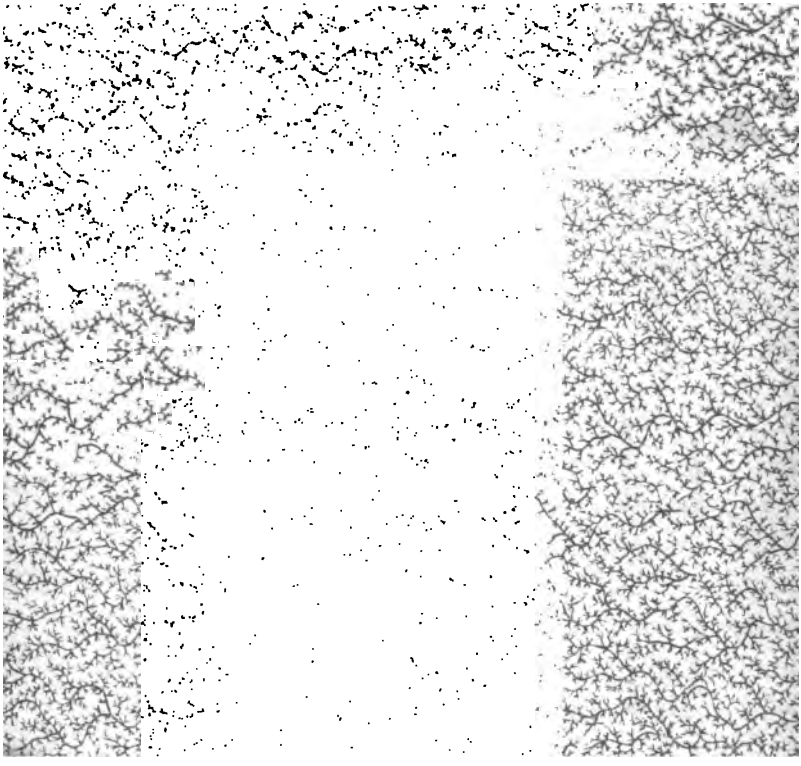
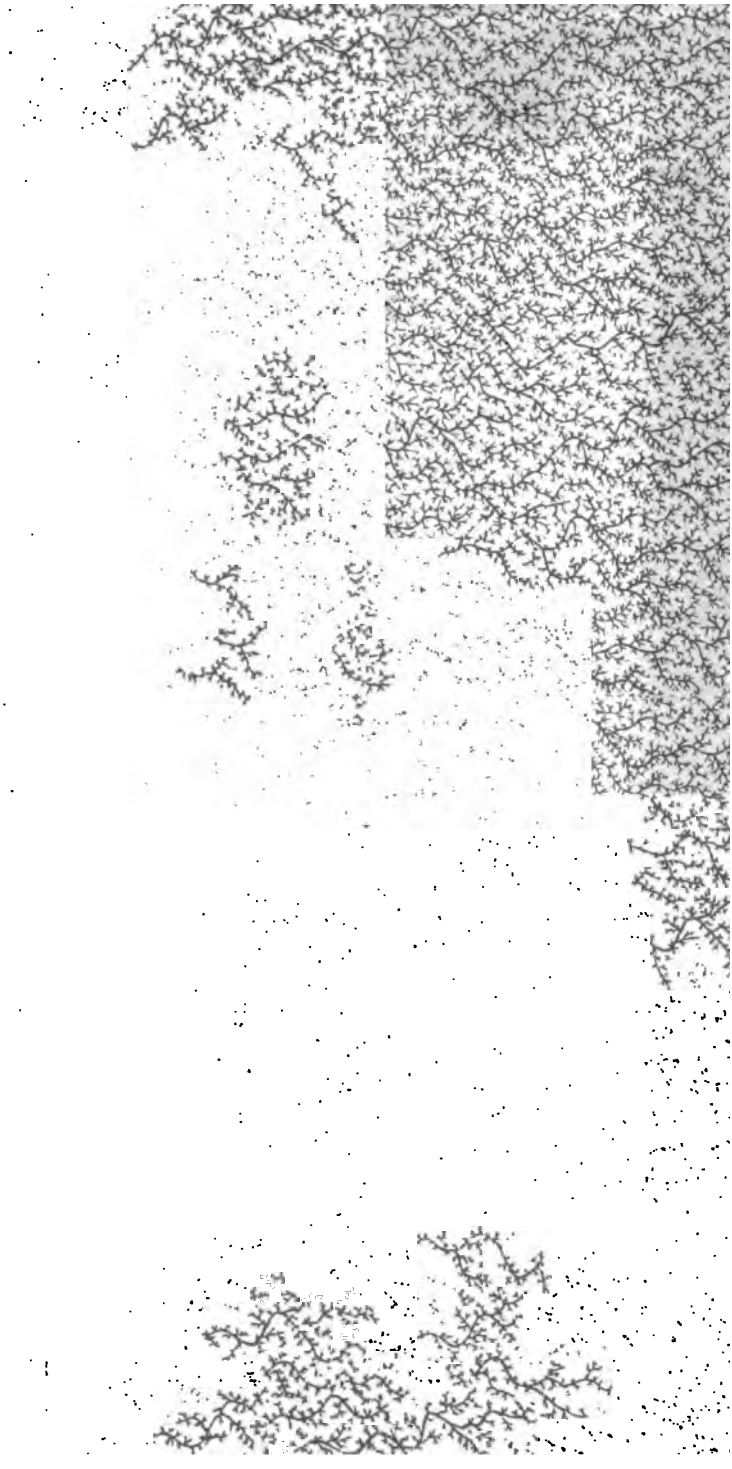
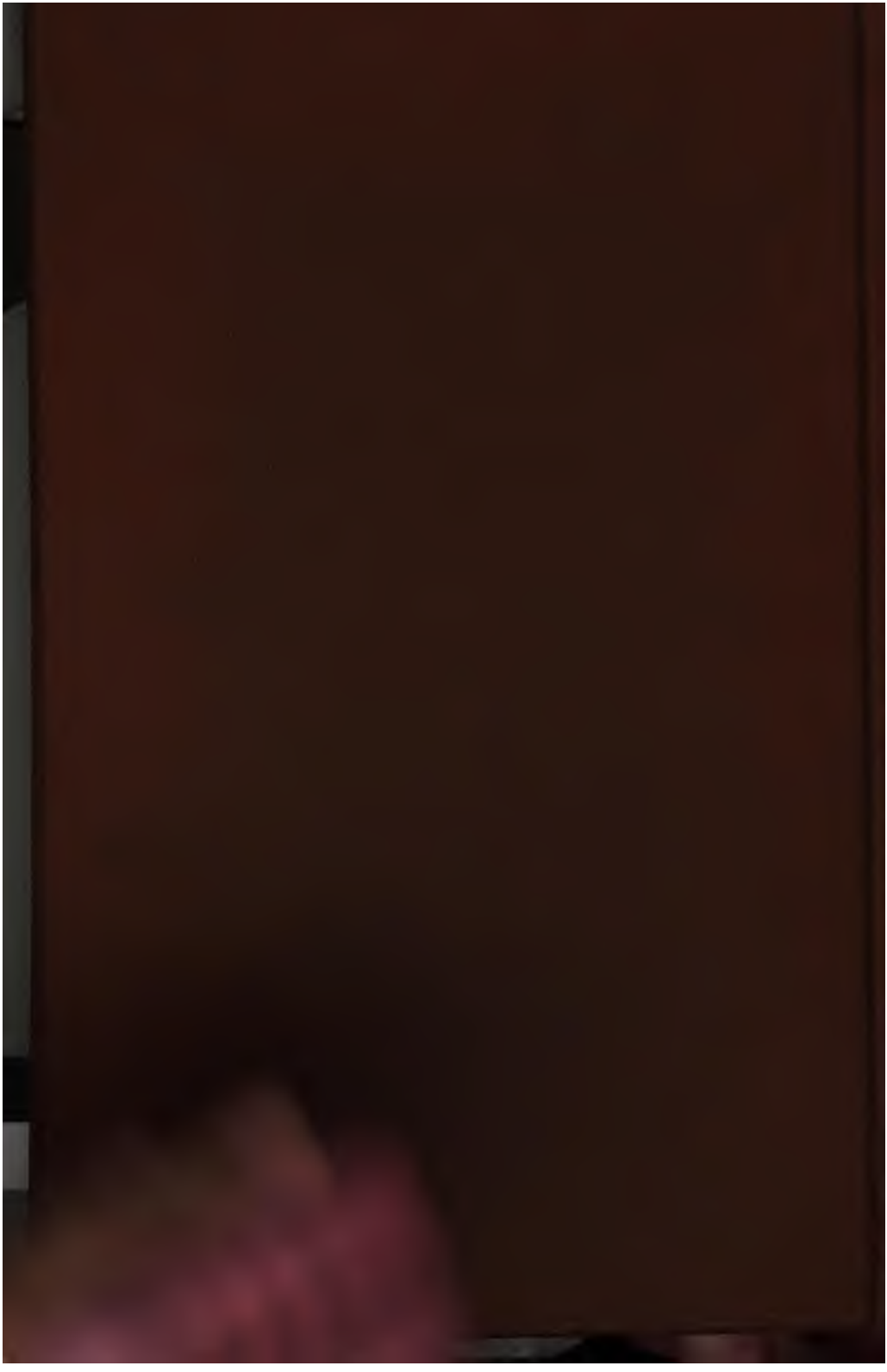
Another

* Heathens did not allow of a light of nature as a sufficient guide in religion or civil life: and their writings abound with testimonies of its insufficiency and corruption.

Nec natura potest justo secernere iniquum.

Hor. Sat. Lib. i. 3.

Πότερον ουν παντες πινουσι τον πλανον η ου; παντες πινουσιν, εφη. "Do all mankind drink of the cup of error when they come into life? Yea, said he, they *all* drink of it." Cebes

[illegible] ανατους μεν πρωτα θεους, νομω ως διανοιαν [illegible]

[illegible] immortal *Gods* as it is laid [illegible] we take this precept, [illegible] of heathenism. [illegible] called natural religion. [illegible] the law of nature. [illegible]